

64 PAGES OF VINTAGE EC HORROR!



# TALES CRYPT

FROM THE



PRESENTS

## THE HAUNT OF

NO. 3

JAN

200

250

CANADA

# FEAR

FEATURING...



THE OLD WITCH



THE VAULT-KEEPER



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



ORASTLY

# THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! WELL, HOP INTO THE HAUNT, HUNGRY HIDIOTS. THIS IS THE OLD WITCH, YOUR SHIVER-CHEF, STEWING ANOTHER SCREAM-SNACK IN HER CRUDDY CAULDRON. I HOPE YOU HAVEN'T EATEN ALREADY, BECAUSE IF YOU HAVE... WELL, COME CLOSER TO THE CAULDRON JUST IN CASE. I'D HATE TO HAVE THE FLOOR MESSED UP WHILE I'M NARRATING MY NAUSEATING NOVELETTE. BESIDES... THE OLD RECIPE NEEDS A LITTLE FLAVORING! AND NOW, READ EMILE'S STORY IN HIS OWN WORDS. HE CALLS IT...

## SUCKER BAIT!

BRISTLY

I WALK SLOWLY THROUGH THE DESERTED NIGHT STREETS AND I LISTEN TO THE TERRIFIED SILENCE OF MY TOWN. I LISTEN TO THE STILLNESS OF ITS LOCKED DOORS AND SHUTTERED WINDOWS, AND I CAN ALMOST HEAR THE FRIGHTENED BREATHING OF THE PEOPLE HIDING BEHIND THEM. I LISTEN TO THE QUICK HEAVY FOOTSTEPS FOLLOWING ME, DRAWING NEARER. MY HANDS ARE COLD AND MY BLOOD POUNDS THROUGH MY SHIVERING BODY. BUT I AM NOT AFRAID. EVEN THOUGH I KNOW I AM GOING TO DIE, I AM NOT AFRAID. FOR I AM TO BE THE VAMPIRE'S LAST VICTIM...



NO MORE WILL THE GOOD PEOPLE OF MY TOWN WRITHE IN THE GRIP OF FEAR. NO MORE WILL EACH DAWN PEER INTO THE DARK STILL MORNINGS AND SEE ANOTHER BLOODLESS CORPSE. FOR THEY WILL FIND HIM NOW. THEY WILL FIND MY BODY AND THEN THEY WILL FIND THE VAMPIRE AND DRIVE A STAKE THROUGH HIS CURSED INHUMAN HEART. THE FOOTSTEPS BEHIND ME ARE CLOSER NOW...



I THINK OF STANLEY, MY OLDER BROTHER, SILENTLY WORKING AT HIS LATHE OR HIS DRILL PRESS OR WHATEVER HE DOES AT HIS JOB ON THE NIGHT SHIFT AT THE FACTORY. AND I THINK OF THE SADNESS THAT WILL BE IN HIS FACE AND THE SILENT BLACK BAND ENCIKLING HIS STRONG ARM...



AND THEN I THINK OF MY FATHER... WHITE AND RIGID, NEVER MORE TO SMILE OR LAUGH OR SING SONGS... MY FATHER... LYING DEAD IN THE TOWN'S ONLY FUNERAL PARLOR WITH NO BLOOD TO DRAIN FROM HIS PUNCTURED BODY...



SUDDENLY THE WHITE RIGIDITY IN MY FATHER'S FACE IS GONE, AND THE SADNESS IN MY BROTHER'S FACE HAS DISAPPEARED AND THEY ARE BOTH SMILING AND LAUGHING AND WAVING AT ME AS I STEP OFF THE TRAIN...



POP!  
STAN!

THERE  
HE IS!

MY BOY!  
EMILE...

YES. THE NIGHT BEFORE LAST, MY FATHER WAS ALIVE AND THERE WAS NO SILENT BLACK BAND ON MY BROTHER'S ARM. THEY HAD COME DOWN TO THE STATION TO MEET ME. I HAD COME HOME... HOME, AFTER FOUR YEARS OF COLLEGE...



POP! IT'S  
GOOD TO  
SEE YOU!

EMILE!  
YOU LOOK  
SO WELL!  
I'M PROUD  
OF YOU,  
EMILE.

ME  
TOO,  
EMILE...

JUST THINK, STANLEY!  
MY BOY. YOUR BROTHER  
EMILE... A  
COLLEGE GRADUATE.  
A CHEMIST...

I OWE IT ALL TO YOU. BOTH  
OF YOU. YOU WERE RESPONS-  
SIBLE. YOU PAID MY WAY.  
I CAN NEVER FULLY REPAY  
YOU. BUT I'LL TRY. HONESTLY,  
I'LL TRY!

AW, CUT IT,  
EMILE. LET  
ME CARRY  
YOUR BAGS.  
HERE...

CAREFUL, STAN.  
I HAVE SOME  
EQUIPMENT IN  
THEM...

COME, EMILE.  
COME. LET'S GO  
HOME...



THAT WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE LAST. I REMEMBER IT ALL SO CLEARLY. WE WALKED HOME, ARM IN ARM, THROUGH THE DESERTED STREETS...

WHERE... WHERE IS EVERYBODY, STAN? WHERE'S ALL THE FOLKS?

LOCKED UP... BEHIND THEIR DOORS...

HE DOESN'T KNOW, POP! HE DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT THE VAMPIRE!

THE VAMPIRE? WHAT VAMPIRE? WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?

THE TOWN IS BEING TERRORIZED BY A VAMPIRE, EMILE! TWELVE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN MURDERED ALREADY... THEIR BLOOD SUCKED FROM THEIR BODIES. TWELVE PEOPLE IN TWELVE DAYS...

IS... IS THIS TRUE, POP?

YES, EMILE. IT... IT'S TRUE. BUT MAYBE, NOW THAT YOU'RE HOME...

AW, POP! WHAT COULD EMILE DO? IT DOESN'T TAKE A COLLEGE EDUCATION TO CATCH A VAMPIRE!

THE HOUSE WAS OLDER, AND MAYBE IN NEED OF PAINTING, BUT IT WAS STILL THE SAME. IT WAS STILL HOME. POP OPENED THE DOOR AND I STEPPED INSIDE. SPIRAL STREAMERS OF CREPE PAPER DECORATED THE LIVING ROOM IN MY HONOR...

WELCOME HOME, EMILE!

LET'S HAVE A DRINK!

WAIT, STAN. LOOK... I APPRECIATE ALL THIS! REALLY! BUT I'M INTERESTED IN THE VAMPIRE! WHAT ABOUT IT...

IT'S HORRIBLE. HORRIBLE! EMILE, IF YOU ONLY KNOW HOW...

POP! WE AGREED TO FORGET ABOUT THE VAMPIRE TONIGHT! WE AGREED THAT WE'D MAKE EMILE'S HOME-COMING A HAPPY ONE...

HOW CAN I BE HAPPY, STAN, WHEN TWELVE OF MY TOWNS-FOLK ARE DEAD?

ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT. IT ALL STARTED WHEN OLD MAN FEENEY WAS FOUND DEAD... TWO TINY HOLES IN HIS NECK, AND HIS BLOOD DRAINED FROM HIS BODY. THEN, ED COBB WAS NEXT... AND SO ON. THE WHOLE TOWN'S SCARED STIFF. NO ONE GOES OUT AT NIGHT EXCEPT ME AND THE OTHER BOYS ON THE NIGHT SHIFT AT THE PLANT.

HASN'T ANYONE FOUND THE VAMPIRE? DIDN'T YOU TRY TO TRAP IT... DRIVE A STAKE THROUGH ITS HEART?

NO ONE'S SEEN IT. NO ONE KNOWS WHERE IT SLEEPS. BELIEVE ME, WE'VE TRIED TO FIND ITS RESTING PLACE BUT IT'S BEEN NO USE. ME AND THE BOYS EVEN TOOK A NIGHT OFF FROM THE PLANT AND WANDERED AROUND TOWN TRY TO CATCH SIGHT OF IT.

IT'S ALMOST TEN-THIRTY. STANLEY, HADN'T YOU BETTER BE RUNNING ALONG?



STANLEY GLANCED AT HIS WATCH...

SORRY, EMILE.  
TIME TO GO TO  
WORK. I'LL SEE  
YOU IN THE  
MORNING...

I DON'T KNOW,  
STAN. I'M PRETTY  
TIRED. I'LL  
PROBABLY STILL  
BE ASLEEP WHEN  
YOU GET HOME...

HE SMILED...

OKAY, KID. WHEN I  
GET UP, THEN, S'LONG,  
NOW. IT... IT'S GOOD  
TO HAVE YOU HOME  
AGAIN, EMILE.

IT'S  
GOOD TO  
BE HOME,  
STAN.

HE WAS GONE. STAN, MY BROTHER.  
FOR THREE YEARS HE'D DONE THIS  
FOR ME...WORKED TO HELP PUT ME  
THROUGH COLLEGE. DAD TURNED  
TO ME...

YOU MUST BE TIRED  
AFTER THAT LONG  
TRIP, EMILE! GOME.  
YOUR ROOM IS READY...

THANKS,  
POP! I'M  
BEAT...

POP WATCHED ME UNDRESS AND CRAWL INTO MY OLD  
BED. THEN HE SNAPPED OFF THE LIGHT. I THINK I  
WAS ASLEEP AS SOON AS MY HEAD HIT THE PILLOW.  
THE NEXT THING I REMEMBER WAS POP'S GOD-AWFUL  
SCREAMING WAKING ME UP...

WHY? WHAT THE...  
POP! POP!

I RUSHED TO POP'S ROOM. THE DOOR WAS LOCKED  
FROM THE INSIDE. BY THE TIME IT BROKE IT OPEN,  
HIS SCREAMS HAD STOPPED. I SNAPPED ON THE  
LIGHT. POP LAY ON HIS BED, DEADLY WHITE. THERE  
WERE TWO SMALL PUNCTURE HOLES IN HIS NECK.

POP! MY GOD!  
POP!

HE WAS DEAD. I DON'T REMEMBER TOO CLEARLY WHAT  
HAPPENED AFTER THAT. BETWEEN FITS OF CRYING, I  
THINK I MADE A PHONE CALL. ANYWAY, THE NEXT THING  
I KNEW, STAN WAS HOME AND HE WAS COMFORTING ME  
AND I WAS SHRIEKING HYSTERICALLY...

I'LL GET IT, STAN! I  
SWEAR I'LL GET  
THAT VAMPIRE!

TAKE IT EASY, EMILE. WE  
ALL WANT TO FIND IT.  
THE WHOLE TOWN WANTS  
TO. WE'LL GET IT FOR  
POP! YOU AND ME.

THE HOUSE WAS FULL OF PEOPLE...NEIGHBORS AND  
FRIENDS. I GUESS AFTER A WHILE I CALMED DOWN.  
STAN MADE A PHONE CALL, AND MR. GODIN, THE TOWN  
UNDERTAKER, CAME AND TOOK POP AWAY. IT WAS  
ABOUT FIVE IN THE MORNING WHEN EVERYBODY'D  
LEFT...

YOU...YOU MUST BE TIRED, STAN! I WILL, EMILE, SOON.  
WHY DON'T YOU GET SOME FEELING BETTER?  
REST?

I HODDED. MY EYES FELL ON MY STILL-UNPACKED SUITCASES. SUDDENLY I KNEW. I KNEW HOW TO TRAP OUR VAMPIRE. I UNPACKED THE SUITCASE WITH MY EQUIPMENT, THE EQUIPMENT I'D BOUGHT IN COLLEGE.

STAN. LOOK. DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS? UM-UH? NO! WHAT IS IT?

IT'S A GEIGER COUNTER, STAN. IT DETECTS RADIO-ACTIVE MATERIAL. IT CLICKS WHEN IT HEARS ANY. THIS IS THE WAY YOU TURN IT ON. SEE? NOW... LISTEN...

I SHAPPED ON THE GEIGER COUNTER, IT BEGAN TO CLICK LOUDLY.

WHY...IT'S CLICKING NOW, EMILE!

YES, STAN! BECAUSE IT'S DETECTING A RADIO-ACTIVE MATERIAL. THIS... IN THIS BOTTLE... IS RADIO PHOSPHOROUS... ISOTOPE P-32... A RADIO-ACTIVE TRACER. THE GEIGER-COUNTER SENSES THE P-32. THAT'S WHY IT'S CLICKING!

WELL, WHAT'S THIS GOT TO DO WITH THE VAMPIRE, EMILE?

I CAN'T TELL YOU, STAN. JUST TRUST ME. AND DON'T WORRY. AFTER TONIGHT, THIS TOWN WILL BE RID OF HIM. YOU'LL SEE. NOW, WHY DON'T YOU GET SOME SLEEP? YOU MUST BE TIRED.

I AM TIRED, EMILE. I THINK I WILL HIT THE HAY...

STAN WENT INTO HIS ROOM AND SHUT THE DOOR. SOON, IT WAS QUIET AND I KNEW HE WAS ASLEEP. FOR A LONG TIME I SAT THERE, WATCHING IT GET LIGHT AND FEELING THE SUN STREAMING IN THE WINDOW. THEN I TOOK A PENCIL AND BEGAN TO WRITE...

DEAR STANLEY,

WHEN YOU AWAKEN, I WILL BE GONE. DON'T LOOK FOR ME. TOMORROW MORNING, TAKE THE GEIGER-COUNTER, COMB THE TOWN, AND LISTEN FOR THE CLICKS. WHEN YOU HEAR THEM, YOU WILL HAVE FOUND THE VAMPIRE'S RESTING PLACE...

MY PLAN WAS SIMPLE. I FINISHED THE NOTE...

... I HAVE SWALLOWED THE ISOTOPE, P-32. IT WILL BE IN MY BLOODSTREAM WHEN THE VAMPIRE ATTACKS ME. WHEN HE RETURNS TO HIS RESTING PLACE, IT WILL BE IN HIS BLOODSTREAM. IT IS THE ONLY WAY, I HAVE SACRIFICED MYSELF FOR POP, WHEN YOU DRIVE THE STAKE, GIVE ONE RAP FOR ME!

EMILE.

I PROPPED THE NOTE UP BESIDE THE GEIGER-COUNTER AND TOOK THE BOTTLE OF RADIO PHOSPHOROUS...

THEN I LEFT THE HOUSE. I WENT OUT INTO THE SUNSHINE. I WENT OUT INTO MY TOWN. I WALKED THE STREETS AND I LOOKED AT THE PEOPLE AND I SAW THE FEAR IN THEIR EYES AND MOURNED MY FATHER AND KNEW THAT WHAT I WAS GOING TO DO WAS RIGHT...



I WATCHED THE SUN SET BEYOND THE DISTANT MOUNTAINS. I WATCHED THE SKY DARKEN AND THE STARS SING OUT... FIRST ONE SOLO, THEN A WHOLE SYMPHONY OF TWINKLING LIGHT. I LIFTED THE BOTTLE OF P-32 TO MY LIPS...

NOW I LISTEN TO THE QUICK HEAVY FOOTSTEPS BEHIND ME, ALMOST ON TOP OF ME. MY HANDS ARE COLD AND MY BLOOD POUNDS THROUGH MY SHIVERING BODY, BUT I AM NOT AFRAID...

I AM NOT AFRAID BECAUSE I KNOW THAT STANLEY HAS AWAKENED AND IS READING MY NOTE...

EMILE! YOU LITTLE FOOL!



AND I KNOW THAT HE WILL SEARCH FOR MY BODY AND FIND IT, AND THE GEIGER-COUNTER WILL BE SILENT BECAUSE THE VAMPIRE WILL HAVE DRAINED THE RADIO-ACTIVE TRACER OUT OF MY BODY WITH MY BLOOD...

AND THEN STANLEY WILL GO LOOKING. AND HE WILL LISTEN. HE WILL PEER INTO CELLARS AND ATTICS AND OLD BUILDINGS AND DESERTED HOUSES...

EMILE... SOB...  
EMILE...

I'LL FIND YOU!  
I'LL FIND YOU!





HE WILL LOOK IN EMPTY LOTS AND OLD WELLS AND CAVES LONG FORGOTTEN...



...AND HE WILL LISTEN. HE WILL LISTEN FOR THE CLICKS, THE CLICKS THAT WILL TELL HIM THAT HE IS NEARING THE VAMPIRE'S RESTING PLACE...



AND THE CLICKS WILL GROW LOUDER AND LOUDER AND LOUDER UNTIL STANLEY WILL STAND AND LOOK DOWN AT THE UNHUMAN LIVING-DEAD WITH A HATE IN HIS EYES AND A CURSE ON HIS LIPS...



...AND HE WILL LIFT THE ROUGHLY-Hewn WOODEN STAKE AND PLACE IT ON THE VAMPIRE'S CHEST AND RAISE THE ROCK...



...AND DRIVE THE STAKE THROUGH THE BLOOD-SUCKING THING'S INHUMAN HEART...

FOR POP...UGH...AND...EMILE...UGH... AND THE OTHERS...



...UNTIL IT SHRIEKS AND FALLS TO DUST AND IS DESTROYED...

I STOP. I STOP WALKING. THE FOOTSTEPS BEHIND ME STOP TOO. I CLENCH MY FISTS AND GRIT MY TEETH AND WAIT. SUDDENLY, I AM SHIVERING NO LONGER. SUDDENLY MY HANDS ARE WARM. SUDDENLY I AM READY. I TURN, SMILING



... AND MY SMILE FREEZES AND MY FACE IS A WAX MASK...

YOU!





STANLEY, MY BROTHER, LEERS  
AT ME, HIS FANGS GLEAMING...



AND THEN HE IS UPON ME...  
THROWING ME TO THE GROUND.  
I FEEL THE FLESH OF MY THROAT  
TEAR AS HIS NEEDLE-LIKE FANGS  
RIP IN...



I FEEL HIS OVERPOWERING STRENGTH  
AS HE HOLDS ME FAST. I FEEL A WARM  
TRICKLE DOWN BEHIND MY NECK WHERE  
THE BLOOD IS RUNNING...



THE STARS ABOVE BEGIN TO SPIN UNTIL THEY WHIRL  
IN CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF LIGHT AND I FEEL MY  
STRENGTH EBBING AND KNOW THAT I AM DYING...



JUST BEFORE THE BLACKNESS CLOSES IN, I THINK  
OF STANLEY GOING HOME AND TURNING ON THE  
GEIGER COUNTER...



AND LISTENING TO THE CLICKS AND TEARING UP MY NOTE AND  
LAUGHING...



HEE, HEE... WHICH IS JUST WHAT I'M  
DOING, EMILE. WELL, AS THEY ALWAYS SAY,  
THE BEST LAID PLANS OF MICE AND  
CHEMISTS OFT GO BOOM. SOMEBODY  
WAS MADE A SUCKER OF, EHP? SO  
STANLEY WAS THE VAMP ALL ALONG. OH...  
BROTHER. NO WONDER HE WORKED  
NIGHTS AND SLEPT DAYS. ALL VAMPIRES  
DO! WHAT? YOU KNOW  
SOMEBODY WHO WORKS  
NIGHTS AND SLEEPS  
DAYS AND HE'S NO  
VAMPIRE? ARE YOU...  
HEE, HEE... SURE?  
TRY LOOKING FOR A  
THIN LAYER OF SOIL  
IN HIS BED. NOW...  
V.K. ...THIS WAY...



# THE VAULT OF HORROR!

NEH, NEH! AND NOW... NOW THAT YOUR STOMACHS HAVE BEEN DULY UPSET BY Q.W.'S GRUD-GOOKING, IT'S MY TURN TO FEED YOU FEAR. THIS IS YOUR HOST IN THE VAULT OF HORROR, THE VAULT-KEEPER, READY TO DIP DOWN INTO MY COLLECTION OF CREEPY CONTRIVANCES AND SPIN ANOTHER SCREAM STORY FOR YOUR PLEASURE. I CALL THIS YELP-YARN...

**LOVER, COME HACK TO ME!**



THE CAR ENGINE COUGHED AND DIED AND THE NERVOUS STACCATO SOUND OF THE DOWNPOUR ON THE ROOF SEEMED TO INCREASE IN TEMPO. CHARLES KEELEY LEANED FORWARD, PEERING PAST THE FOGGING WINDSHIELD INTO THE FLUID BLACKNESS ILLUMINATED BY THE HEADLIGHTS. BESIDE HIM, PEGGY, HIS BRIDE OF SCARCELY TWO HOURS, GIGGLED.

THIS ISN'T FUNNY, PEG! SHE'S CONKED OUT FOR GOOD! WHAT A WAY TO BEGIN A HONEY-MOON.

OH, DARLING, I'M SO HAPPY. EVEN BEING BOGGED DOWN ON A LONELY BACKWOODS ROAD IS FUN... AS LONG AS IT'S WITH YOU.



CHARLIE TURNED TO HIS LOVELY NEW WIFE. SHE GRINNED AT HIM AND THE LOVE AND HAPPINESS THAT WAS INSIDE HER SPARKLED OUTWARD THROUGH HER SMILING EYES.

YES, BUT WELL SPENDING ONE'S WEDDING NIGHT STUCK IN A CAR ISN'T MY IDEA OF FUN, PEG.

CHARLIE, DEAR TWO HOURS AGO I WAS PEGGY ANDERSON LIVING WITH AN OLD MAID AUNT AN ORPHAN, WHO GREW UP KNOWING NO LOVE.



ALAN ANDERSON, MY FATHER, WAS KILLED BEFORE I WAS BORN. AUNT NEVER TOLD ME WHY OR HOW, ALTHOUGH I QUESTIONED HER SO MANY TIMES ABOUT IT. SOMETIMES I THINK SHE WAS TRYING TO HIDE SOMETHING ABOUT MY FATHER'S DEATH. SOME TERRIBLE MYSTERY!



AND MY MOTHER FREDA DIED GIVING BIRTH TO ME. YOU MET AUNT. YOU KNOW WHAT? A FRIGID OLD WOMAN SHE IS. SHE BROUGHT ME UP, CHARLIE. SHE NEVER GAVE ME ANY AFFECTION BECAUSE I DOUBT IF THERE WAS AN OUNCE OF AFFECTION IN HER. GIVE THEM, DEAREST, YOU CAME ALONG AND I KNEW WHAT IT WAS. LOVE SOMEONE, AND WANT SOMEONE, AND FOR SOMEONE TO LOVE AND WANT ME.



PEGGY SNUGGLED UP CLOSE TO HER NEW HUSBAND.

SO YOU SEE, DARLING? WHETHER IT'S IN A PALACE OR A BOGGED-DOWN CAR ON A DESERTED MUDDY ROAD, AS LONG AS I CAN BE CLOSE TO YOU... AND KNOW LOVE.



THERE WAS A FLASH OF LIGHTNING AND A THUNDER CLAP ROARED. CHARLES REACHED OVER AND SNAPPED OFF THE HEADLIGHTS, AND THE DARKNESS CLOSED IN AROUND THEM. HE COULD HEAR PEGGY'S HEAVY BREATHING ABOVE THE DOWNPOUR AS HE SLID HIS ARMS AROUND HER AND DREW HER TO HIM.

WAIT, CHARLIE! LOOK! WHAT? WHERE?



PEGGY POINTED OFF TO THE LEFT INTO THE DOWNPOURING BLACKNESS.

WAIT UNTIL ANOTHER LIGHTNING FLASH. S HOUEYTES IT THERE! SEE?



PEGGY FLUNG OPEN THE CAR DOOR. THE RAIN LASHED IN AT THEM.

COME ON, DARLING. EVEN IF IT'S DESERTED, IT'LL BE LESS CRAMPED THAN THE CAR. LET'S RUN FOR IT.





THEY RAN...HAND IN HAND...THROUGH THE GOLD WHITE LIGHTNING FLASHES AND THE EAR-SPLITTING THUNDER ROLLS...THROUGH THE CASCADING SHEETS OF RAIN AND SPLASHING MUD...UNTIL THEY CLIMBED, PANTING AND BREATHLESS, ONTO THE PORCH OF THE OLD HOUSE...

WHEW! I'M SOAKED TO THE SKIN.

ME TOO. LOOKS LIKE THIS PLACE IS DESERTED. THE WINDOWS ARE ALL BOARDED UP AND... THE DOOR'S LOCKED.



BEHIND THEM, THE RAIN SWEEPED OFF THE PORCH ROOF AND WATERFALLED TO THE GROUND, FEEDING GROWING RIVULETS THAT RAN CRAZILY OFF INTO THE BLACKNESS DOWN THE HILL. CHARLIE SHRUGGED...

WELL... IT'S EITHER BACK TO THE CAR FOR US OR BREAK IN.

I'M SURE WHOEVER OWNS THE HOUSE WOULDN'T MIND UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES.



THE AGED LOCK, ROTTED WITH THE YEARS, SPUNTERED OPEN UNDER CHARLES'S WEIGHT, AND THE DOOR SWUNG WIDE...

WELL, MRS. KEELEY? WELCOME TO OUR HONEYMOON COTTAGE.

OH, CHARLES.



PEGGY LAUGHED HAPPILY AS CHARLES LIFTED HER IN HIS STRONG ARMS AND CARRIED HER ACROSS THE THRESHOLD.

IT'S THE CUSTOM, YOU KNOW, PEGGY.

DARLING.



CHARLES KICKED THE DOOR SHUT BEHIND HIM, SLAMMING OUT THE NOISE OF THE STORM. IN THE GLOOM, WHITE HULKS SAT SILENTLY, COVERED WITH THE DUST OF YEARS OF ABANDONMENT.

WELL, WHAT DO YOU KNOW? FURNITURE LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE MOVED OUT AND LEFT EVERYTHING EXACTLY AS IS.

THEN... THEN THERE MUST BE A BED-ROOM... AND A BED.



CHARLES FOUND CANDLES IN A HOLDER UNDER ONE OF THE DUST COVERINGS AND LIT THEM, AND THEY BEGAN TO EXPLORE THE DESERTED OLD MANSION. A MASSIVE WINDING STAIRCASE LED FROM THE MAIN FLOOR UPWARD. UPSTAIRS, THEY FOUND

A BEDROOM WITH A FIREPLACE... AND LOOSE... SAY! LOOK AT THAT BATTLE-AXE OVER THE MANTLE.

START A FIRE DEAR, WHILE I UNCOVER THIS BED...



SOON, A ROARING FIRE WAS FILLING THE DUSTY OLD BEDROOM WITH ITS WARMTH. BEFORE IT, A MAKESHIFT CLOTHESLINE HELD DRIPPING CLOTHES. THE HUGE BED HAD BEEN CLEARED OF ITS DUST-COVER AND LAY WITH ITS BLANKET THROWN BACK INVITINGLY. THE OVERNIGHT BAG SAT OPEN UPON A CHAIR. CHARLES AND PEGGY STOOD, WATCHING THE FLAMES...

READY TO HIT THE HAY, NOW?

MMM



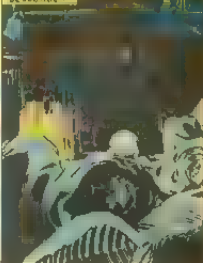
OUTSIDE, THE STORM LASHED AT THE OLD HOUSE. BUT WITHIN THE NEWLY WEDS WERE OBLIVIOUS TO ITS FURY, HEARING ONLY THE POUNDING OF THE RAIN HEARTS AS THEY WALKED TOGETHER TO THE HUGE BED.



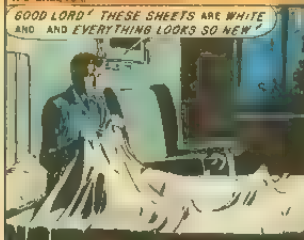
THE FIRE CRACKLED AND LEAPED. LOOKING AT THE LOGS, THE STORM SEEMED TO INCREASE IN INTENSITY, RAGING AND WHIPPING THE ANCIENT EDIFICE BETWEEN YELLOWED AND MUSTY SHEETS. CHARLES AND PEGGY WERE CLOSE, FEELING THE INCREASING INTENSITY OF THEIR OWN EMOTIONAL STORM.



AND THEN, THE STORMS FADED, SPENDING THEMSELVES. THE FIRE COOLED. SLEEP AND PEACE DESCENDED.



A SUDDEN SOUND AWAKENED CHARLES, AND HE SAT UP ABRUPTLY, STARING INTO THE DARKNESS. THE FIRE HAD GONE OUT. THE BED BESIDE HIM WAS EMPTY AND THE SHEETS...



"GOOD LORD! THESE SHEETS ARE WHITE AND AND EVERYTHING LOOKS SO NEW!"

THE ROOM WAS NO LONGER DUNGY AND DUSTY AND SMELLING OF AGE. EVERYTHING WAS SPOTLESS AND CLEAN AND HAD THE ODOOR OF NEWNESS. THE WINDOWS THAT HAD BEEN BOARDED UP NOW ADMITTED THE LIGHT FROM A COLD MOON SHINING OUTSIDE.



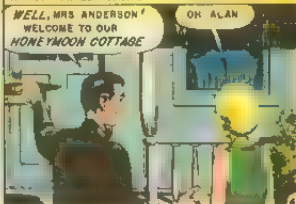
"WHAT IS THIS? PEGGY! PEGGY! WHERE ARE YOU?"

THE RUADESHIFT CLOTHESLINE WAS GONE. THEIR OVERNIGHT BAG WAS MISSING. OUTSIDE AN ENGINE SPUTTERED TO A STOP. CHARLES WENT TO A WINDOW AND PEERED OUT. LAUGHTER DRIFTED UP TO HIM. A MAN AND WOMAN WERE GETTING OUT OF AN OLD STYLE LIMOUSINE.



"WILL YOU LOOK AT THAT? AN OLD 'LA SALLE' AND IT LOOKS BRAND NEW."

CHARLES WATCHED AS THE COUPLE CROSSED THE NEWLY PAVED BLUE-STONE DRIVE THAT HAD BEEN JUST A MASS OF WEEDS AND MUD ONLY A SHORT TIME BEFORE. HE LISTENED AS THEY MOUNTED THE NEWLY PAINTED PORCH.



"WELL, MRS. ANDERSON! WELCOME TO OUR HONEYMOON COTTAGE."

"OH, ALAN."

ANDERSON? ALAN ANDERSON. WHY DID THAT NAME SOUND FAMILIAR? DOWNSTAIRS A KEY RATTLED IN THE LOCK AND A DOOR SWUNG OPEN. CHARLES CROSSED THE BEDROOM AND WENT TO THE HEAD OF THE STAIRS.



IT'S THE CUSTOM, YOU KNOW, FREDA.

DARLING

CHARLES GASPED. FREDA? WHY THAT WAS PEGGY DOWN THERE BEING CARRIED ACROSS THE THRESHOLD? OR WAS IT PEGGY? IT LOOKED LIKE PEGGY.

WELL, DARLING, THIS IS YOUR NEW HOME LIKE IT?

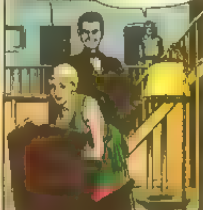
FREDA AND ALAN ANDERSON OF COURSE!



DOWN BELOW, AS UPSTAIRS, EVERYTHING WAS SHINY AND NEW. THE DUST COVERS THAT HAD HOODED THE FURNITURE WERE GONE.

OH, ALAN IT'S BEAUTIFUL!

FREDA AND ALAN ANDERSON WERE PEGGY'S PARENTS!



CHARLES DUCKED INTO THE BEDROOM AS THEY CAME UP THE STAIRS. HE HELD HIS BREATH, COWERING BEHIND THE DOOR AS THEY ENTERED.



THEIR CLOTHES THEY'RE THE STYLES OF THE TWENTIES? AND THE OLD-FASHIONED OAK THE NEW FURNITURE! WHY, I'M WITNESSING WHAT HAPPENED TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO IN THIS VERY HOUSE.

STARRY A PRE, DEAR

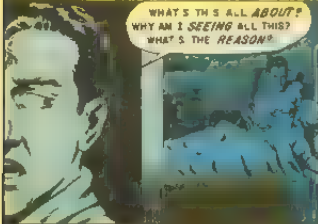
CHARLES WATCHED, FASCINATED, AS THE MAN LIT A FIRE IN THE NEW FIREPLACE AND THE WOMAN BEGAN TO UNDRESS. HE DARED NOT MOVE FROM HIS HIDING PLACE BEHIND THE BEDROOM DOOR FOR FEAR OF BEING SEEN.



I'M WITNESSING PEGGY'S MOTHER AND FATHER'S WEDDING NIGHT.

OH ALAN. I'M SO DELIRIOUSLY HAPPY.

THE COUPLE MOVED, ARM AND ARM, TO THE BED THAT CHARLES HAD AWAKENED IN. HE TURNED AWAY LISTENING TO THEIR HEAVY BREATHING, THEIR SOFT VOICES WHISPERING.



WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT? WHY AM I SEEING ALL THIS? WHAT'S THE REASON?

EMBARRASSED BY THE INTIMACY OF THE SCENE BEYOND, CHARLES WAITED, STARING AT THE BLANK DOOR, UNTIL THEIR SOFT WHISPERS FADED AND THEIR GASPS AND SIGNS TURNED TO THE REGULAR BREATHING OF SLEEP.



THEY'RE ASLEEP! NOW HOW 'N BLAZES DO I GET BACK TO 1933 TO PEGGY?



CHARLES WAS ABOUT TO STEP FROM HIS HIDING PLACE AND TIP-TOE DOWNSTAIRS WHEN GLIDING FOOTSTEPS APPROACHED

OH, OH! IT'S FREDA PEGGY'S MOTHER. SHE'S COMING THIS WAY!



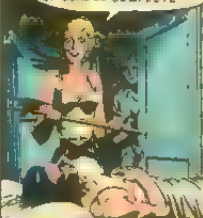
FREDA'S FACE WAS A GRINNING MASK WITH GLAZED STARING EYES AS SHE SEEMED TO FLOAT ACROSS THE BEDROOM TOWARD THE FIREPLACE

SHE'S REACHING FOR THAT BATTLE-AXE OVER THE MANTEL



GRIPPING THE LETHAL LOOKING WEAPON IN HER TINY WHITE KNUCKLED FISTS. FREDA RETURNED TO THE BED WHERE ALAN LAY SLEEPING PEACEFULLY SHE STOOD OVER HIM HER EYES FILLING WITH TEARS.

OH, ALAN! ALAN! THIS NIGHT IS SO BEAUTIFUL THIS LOVE OF OURS SO COMPLETE



CHARLES LISTENED, ROOTED TO HIS HIDING PLACE, AS FREDA'S SOFT QUIVERING VOICE DRIFTED ACROSS THE ROOM...

THIS IS THE WAY LOVE SHOULD ALWAYS REMAIN, MY DARLING. SWEET AND CLEAN AND PASSIONATE BUT IT DOESN'T TIME SOURS LOVE AGE DIRTIES IT THE PASSION COOLS



HER WORDS WERE ALMOST SING-SONGS NOW ALMOST RAVING BUT THAT SN'T GOING TO HAPPEN TO OUR SWEET CLEAN PASSIONATE LOVE, MY DEAREST

I'M NOT GOING TO LET IT I'M GOING TO KEEP IT EXACTLY AS IT IS PRESERVE IT FOR ALWAYS! I'M GOING TO MAKE SURE TIME DOESN'T SPOIL OUR LOVE! ALAN! ALAN! WAKE UP, DARLING!

GOOD LORD! SHE'S SHE'S



FOR A MOMENT OF SHEER TERROR CHARLES FROZE, WATCHING HORRIFIED AS FREDA RAISED THE BATTLE-AXE. THEN HIS VOICE ERUPTED FROM HIS THROAT IN A HIGH-PITCHED SCREAM AND HE DARTED FORWARD...

MY GOD! SHE'S GOING TO KILL HIM!

HIS? FREDA! FREDA...



CHARLES LUNGED FORWARD TRYING TO CATCH FREDA'S ARMS, BUT HIS FINGERS CLOSED ON NOTHINGNESS. THE BATTLE-AXE FELL...

STOP! STOP. OH, LORD I CAN'T STOP HER! I CAN'T FEEL HER SHE'S LIKE A GHOST!



ALL CHARLES COULD DO WAS TO WATCH HORRIFIED AS FREDA LIFTED THE HUGE BATTLE-AXE AGAIN AND AGAIN UNTIL THE FIGURE ON THE BED BECAME A SOFT, WET, RED MASH.



SATISFIED, FREDA TIPTOED BACK ACROSS THE ROOM AND REPLACED THE BLOODY BATTLE-AXE OVER THE FIREPLACE...



THEN SHE RETURNED TO THE BED AND CRAWLED IN BESIDE THE BLOODY-RED REMAINS, SMILING AND WHISPERING SOFTLY...



CHARLES FELT HIS STOMACH HEAVING AND STUMBLED FROM THE GORY SCENE IN THE BEDROOM. EVERYTHING BEGAN TO SPIN. HE FELT THE FLOOR SWEWY BENEATH HIM. SUDDENLY HE WAS LYING IN BED, STARING AT A DUSTY OLD FIRE PLACE IN A DUSTY OLD BEDROOM WITH BOARDED UP WINDOWS...



IT WAS ONLY A DREAM. EVERYTHING EXACTLY AS IT WAS, THE DUST, THE OLD FIREPLACE, THE BATTLE-AXE. GASP... THE BATTLE-AXE OVER THE FIREPLACE! IT'S GONE!



PEGGY'S VOICE CAME FROM BEHIND HIM... ALMOST SING-SONG... ALMOST RAVING. CHARLES'S BLOOD FROZE THOSE WORDS... THOSE VERY WORDS. HE DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO TURN AROUND TO KNOW THAT PEGGY WAS THERE STANDING OVER HIM, RAISING THE BATTLE-AXE IN HER TINY WHITE-KNUCKLED FISTS...



AND AS HE FELT THE COLD STEEL CUTTING INWARD AGAIN AND AGAIN, AND FELT HIS STRENGTH EBBING AWAY, CHARLES SUDDENLY KNEW THAT PEGGY, TOO, HAD CONCEIVED A CHILD THIS NIGHT WHO WOULD MURDER HER HUSBAND ON HER WEDDING NIGHT AS HER INSANE GRANDMOTHER AND INSANE MOTHER HAD DONE.

HEN HEH! TALK ABOUT FAMILY TRADITION, EH, CREEPS? ALL YOU WOULD-BE GROOMS. TAKE A LESSON! CHECK THE BRIDE'S BACKGROUND! IT'S BETTER TO HAVE A BATTLE-AXE FOR A MOTHER-IN-LAW THAN TO HAVE ONE FOR AN UNDERTAKER!



# INCENDIARY!



From the doorway in which he crouched, Bronson watched the smoke spiraling toward the sky. His eyes glittered happily with the reflection of the orange and crimson and blue tints lighting up the night: it was the best fire he had ever set.

His head turned when he heard the piercing siren announcing the arrival of the fire trucks. A smile wrinkled the corners of his mouth as he watched the long coils of hose unrolling, saw the men moving frantically forward in their billowing black-rubber coats. He pursed his lips and, in the safety of the doorway, observed critically the fire-fighting technique on display before him. The men were good, he admitted grudgingly . . . but they'd never get the flames under control before the towering building was gutted. It would take at least an hour before the last embers died amidst the charred ruins . . . an hour and he'd collect the biggest fee of his career.

He opened his silver cigarette case and removed a slim white cylinder of tobacco. For a moment he admired the gold monogram on the paper: only the top-ranking arsonist could afford his own blended cigarettes, like *this*. Meticulously he tapped the cigarette against his manicured thumbnail and turned again to watch the fire he had started.

It was that new fluid that made this job so simple. The old kerosene-rag dodge . . . that was all right for pikers and run-of-the-mill torches. And the guys who used the candle-technique: let them pick up their crummy \$25 for a hit-or-miss job. When you get into

the big time like Bronson . . . when arson was made to pay off so well you needed a firm of accountants to handle your income tax returns . . . you did the job *right* and you did it *yourself*.

The new fluid, Bronson thought to himself, would net him a *million*! The painstaking experiments with gasoline, kerosene, sulfur and remote-controlled time-fuses was going to *really* pay off! The incendiary he had so cunningly contrived could make an almost instantaneous pyre of *concrete*!

He chuckled to himself, drawing a gold lighter from his pocket and fondling it as he watched the firemen scurrying around the base of the burning building. The ingenious way he had planted his new incendiary fluid, so that pressing a button 50 yards away generated intense heat and forced vapors to rise and fire the upper stories . . . made the job a high-speed operation and guaranteed there'd be no evidence of arson for snoopers to uncover.

Bronson placed the monogrammed cigarette in his mouth, raised the lighter and pressed the flywheel button. A yellow flame leaped out toward the cigarette, turned the tobacco orange-white . . . and, in the same instant, enveloped Bronson in a cocoon of fire.

A squeal of agony burst from his seared lips as he realized what had happened: those *fumes* generated by his incendiary liquid had clung to *him*! The first contact with flame had set him afire as if he was made of dry tinder!

He staggered out of the doorway, dimly aware of the stench of burning flesh . . . he felt the skin sloughing off his hands like dying ashes taken from a burnt log. A second screech of agony welled up to his scorched lips as he stumbled and fell in a charred heap. The eerie echo still reverberated through the alley as the last tongues of flame flickered over his unrecognizable body. . .



# THE OLD WITCH'S GRIM FAIRY TALE!

HEE, HEE! HERE'S ANOTHER OF MY INFANTILE INSANITIES ANOTHER CHILDISH CHILLER. ANOTHER NURSERY NAUSEATOR I CALL THIS FOUL FABLE...

**DOUBLE-HEADER!**



ONCE UPON A TIME, LONG, LONG AGO THERE LIVED AN OLD KING WHO, EVEN THOUGH HE WAS SURROUNDED BY ALL THE LOVELY LADIES OF THE COURT ALL DAY LONG WAS VERY LONELY. THE KING WAS LONELY BECAUSE EVEN THOUGH ALL OF THE PALACE LADIES YEARNED TO BE HIS QUEEN HE HAD NEVER MARRIED. THE KING HAD NEVER MARRIED BECAUSE HE'D NEVER FALLEN IN LOVE...

EVERY DAY THE LADIES OF THE COURT WOULD SMILE AND WINK AND TRY TO PLEASE THE LONELY OLD KING, BUT THE LONELY OLD KING WAS A RIGHTEOUS OLD CUSS, AND HE WOULDN'T FALL FOR THEIR FLIRTATIONS...

GOOD MORNING,  
YOUR MAJESTY!

GOOD MORNING,  
SIRE!

GOOD  
MORNING,  
YOUR MAJESTY!

HMMMPH.

DO YOU THINK  
THIS GOWN IS  
TOO... DARING,  
SIRE?

DO YOU LIKE  
THE WAY I'VE  
DONE MY HAIR,  
SIRE?

IS THERE ANY-  
THING I CAN  
DO FOR YOU  
TODAY, SIRE?

HMMMPH!



THEN, ONE DAY, WHILE THE COURT LADIES WERE EACH TRYING VERY HARD TO GAIN THE LONELY OLD KING'S ATTENTION, HE SUDDENLY SAT BOLT UPRIGHT IN HIS THRONE.



THE OLD KING GASPED.



THERE, AT THE FAR END OF THE COURT, THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL THE OLD KING HAD EVER SEEN WAS BRIEFLY MOPPING THE FLOOR.



THE SMILING GIRL WAS BROUGHT BEFORE THE LOVE-STUCK KING. YES, KIDDIES, **LOVESTUCK!** THE OLD BOY HAD FINALLY FALLEN IN LOVE. HE LOOKED HER OVER HUNGRILY. . . THEN



THE LADIES OF THE COURT FILED OUT, LEAVING THE OLD KING ALONE WITH THE SCULLERY MAID.



MEANWHILE, INSIDE THE THRONE ROOM..



AND WHEN THE LADIES OF THE COURT WERE ALLOWED TO RETURN TO THE THRONE ROOM, THE KING ANNOUNCED:



AND SO, SYLVIA AND THE OLD KING WERE MARRIED. AND IF SHE'D BEEN BEAUTIFUL IN HER SCULLERY RAGS, SHE WAS EVEN MORE SO IN HER NEW REGAL DRESS. THE LADIES OF THE COURT WERE EXTREMELY JEALOUS OF HER.

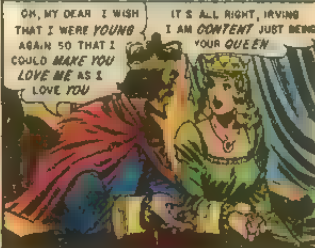


LOOK AT HIM, THE OLD FOOL. SHE'S HALF HIS AGE

DON'T WORRY HE'LL SOON TIRE OF HER

AND ONE OF US WILL YET BE QUEEN.

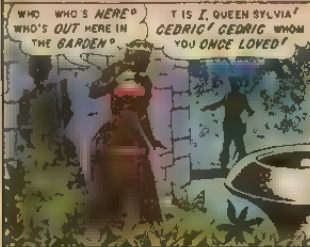
BUT THE COURT LADIES WERE WRONG. THE OLD KING DID NOT SOON TIRE OF HIS NEW YOUNG QUEEN. IN FACT, AS EACH DAY PASSED, HE FELL MORE AND MORE IN LOVE WITH HER.



OH, MY DEAR I WISH THAT I WERE YOUNG AGAIN SO THAT I COULD MAKE YOU LOVE ME AS I LOVE YOU

IT'S ALL RIGHT, IRVING I AM CONTENT JUST BEING YOUR QUEEN

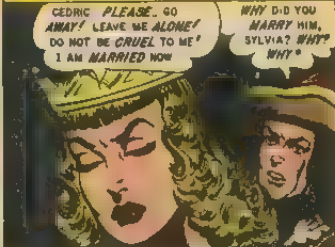
AND QUEEN SYLVIA WAS CONTENT JUST BEING THE QUEEN, EVEN THOUGH KING IRVING COULD NOT PHYSICALLY SHOW HIS LOVE FOR HER. INSTEAD, AT NIGHT, QUEEN SYLVIA WOULD GO WALKING...



WHO WHO'S HERE? WHO'S OUT HERE IN THE GARDEN?

IT IS I, QUEEN SYLVIA! CEDRIC! CEDRIC WHOM YOU ONCE LOVED!

HE STOOD BEFORE HER...RESPLENDENT IN HIS UNIFORM. CEDRIC, CAPTAIN OF THE ROYAL GUARDS. CEDRIC, WHOM, WHEN SYLVIA HAD BEEN BUT A SCULLERY MAID, SHE'D LOVED MADLY AND PASSIONATELY...



CEDRIC PLEASE... GO AWAY! LEAVE ME ALONE! DO NOT BE CRUEL TO ME! I AM MARRIED NOW

WHY DID YOU MARRY HIM, SYLVIA? WHY? WHY?

CEDRIC MOVED FORWARD. SYLVIA BACKED OFF...

BECAUSE HE OFFERED ME HIS KINGDOM TO BE HIS QUEEN! WHAT GIRL COULD REFUSE?

BUT WHAT ELSE DID HE OFFER YOU? COULD HE OFFER THE LOVE A YOUNG WOMAN NEEDS?



CEDRIC CAUGHT HER HAND...

HE...HE... LOVES ME VERY MUCH, CEDRIC. HE...

BUT AME YOU SATISFIED WITH HIS KIND OF LOVE OR DO YOU NEED...THIS?



AND HE SWEEPED HER INTO HIS STRONG ARMS...

OH, CEDRIC DARLING... SYLVIA...



MEANWHILE, FROM HER DARK-ENED BEDROOM WINDOW, ONE OF THE COURT LADIES WATCHED THE PASS ON A SCENE IN THE MOON-LIGHT.

GASP SO! THE QUEEN HAS A LOVER WAIT UNTIL YVONNE HEARS ABOUT THIS!



THE NEXT NIGHT, WHEN ONCE AGAIN THE QUEEN MET THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARDS SECRETLY, SOMEONE WAS LISTENING

THE KING IS ASLEEP, MY SWEET...

SYLVIA... DARLING?

GASP! IT'S TRUE. MARIE WAS RIGHT!



AND SO

I SAW THEM, WITH MY OWN EYES, SUZETTE!

AND I HEARD THEM.

THE KING MUST KNOW. THEN WE'LL BE RID OF HER. I'M GOING TO TELL HIM.



SUZETTE REQUESTED AUDIENCE WITH THE KING... PRIVATELY...

ALL RIGHT, MY DEAR WHAT IS THIS URGENT NEWS YOU HAVE FOR ME?

IT CONCERNS THE QUEEN, SIRE AND THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARDS. IT IS A MATTER OF YOUR HONOR.



THE KING LISTENED TO SUZETTE'S STORY WITH A GREAT SADNESS IN HIS HEART

~~MARIE AND YVONNE~~ TOGETHER IN THE GARDEN AND YVONNE HEARD THEM. AND I I HAD TO TELL YOU.

SYLVIA... MY SYLVIA.



THE KING DISMISSED SUZETTE. HE CLOSED HIS TIRED OLD EYES. THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING TO DO. IT WAS A MATTER OF HONOR, NO MATTER HOW MUCH IT HURT.

SUMMON THE QUEEN AND THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARDS!

YES, YOUR MAJESTY!



MARIE, YVONNE, AND SUZETTE WATCHED AS THE QUEEN AND THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARDS WERE BROUGHT TO THE THRONE ROOM

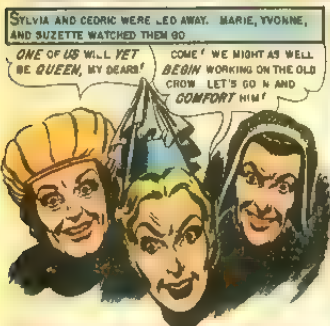
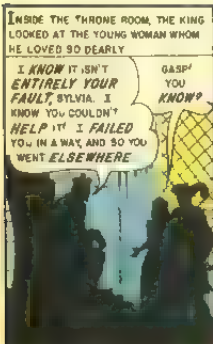
WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN YVONNE?

I DON'T KNOW, MARIE!

I'LL TELL YOU! HE'LL HAVE THEM BOTH BENEADED. HE MUST HEIS THE KING! THEY HAVE INSULTED HIS HONOR!







IN THE COURT YARD, THE AXEMAN WAS GRINDING HIS HUGE AXE, AND THE SOUND DROINED OUT THE MUTED SCREAMS THAT CAME FROM WITHIN THE CASTLE...

ALL OF THE LORDS AND LADIES OF THE COURT HAD GATHERED TO WITNESS THE EXECUTION. ALL BUT THREE. FINALLY THE KING EMERGED AND TOOK HIS PLACE BESIDE THE CHOPPING BLOCK. HE GAVE THE SIGNAL, AND SYLVIA AND CEDRIC WERE LED FORWARD.

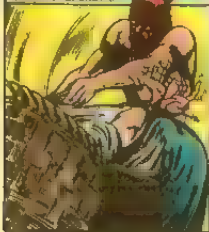
EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE...



THE AXEMAN'S BLADE ROSE AND FELL AND THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARDS' HEAD DROPPED INTO THE WAITING BASKET...

THEN THE AXE ROSE ONCE AGAIN, AND WHEN IT CAME DOWN SYLVIA, THE KING'S ONLY LOVE, LIVED NO MORE.

NOW THE KING WAS A LONELY KING ONCE MORE. AS HE WALKED BACK INTO THE CASTLE, THE COURT LORDS AND LADIES SAW TEARS STREAMING FROM HIS EYES.



INSIDE THE CASTLE, THE THREE LADIES OF THE COURT WHO HAD MISSED VIEWING THE EXECUTION, WRITHED ON THE STONE FLOOR OF THE THRONE ROOM. MARIE COVERED HER EYES! THEY HAD BEEN PAINFULLY TORN OUT FOR WHAT SHE'D SEEN. YVONNE HAD HER HANDS CLAPPED OVER HER EARS! THE KING HAD BURNED THEM OFF WITH A RED-HOT POKER FOR WHAT SHE'D HEARD. AND SUZETTE CLUTCHED AT HER BLEEDING MOUTH! THE KING HAD CUT OUT HER TONGUE FOR WHAT SHE HAD SPOKEN.

HEE, HEE. SEE NO EVIL, HEAR NO EVIL, SPEAK NO EVIL, ENJOYEST! SO THE OLD ADAGE GOES. OLD KING IRVING, IN HIS WRATH, SURE MADE MONKEYS OUT OF THE THREE TROUBLEMAKERS, EH? WELL, THAT'S MY GRIM FAIRY TALE FOR THIS ISSUE OF COURSE, AS IN ALL FAIRY TALES, EVEN GRIM ONES, EVERYBODY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER. YEP, SEEMS THE KING WENT SNOOPING AND FOUND A



CHAMBER MAID MAKING BEDS ON THE THIRD FLOOR. AND AH, BUT THAT'S ANOTHER... EVEN GRIMMER TALE. WELL, O.K. ANIMATE, SO, BYE NOW!



# THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! AH. *SPRING* IS HERE, EN, FIEEDS? IT'S *BASEBALL TIME* AGAIN. WELL, I'VE GOT A *BASEBALL HORROR YARN* THAT WILL DRIVE YOU *BATTY*. SO CREEP INTO THE *CRYPT OF TERROR*, SETTLE DOWN ON THAT *SACK*, AND YOUR *CRYPT-KEEPER* WILL *PITCH* YOU THE *BLOOD-CURDLING, SPINE-TINGLING, FEARFUL FUNSO-FABLE* I CALL

## FOUL PLAY!

IT IS MIDNIGHT. THE EVE OF OPENING DAY. CENTRAL CITY'S BUSH-LEAGUE BALL PARK LIES IN DARKNESS. THERE IS A SMELL OF FRESHLY PAINTED SEATS AND RAILS AND HOT-DOG STANDS HANGING IN THE COOL NIGHT AIR. THE CHAMPIONSHIP PENNANT SAGS LIMPLY FROM THE NEW-WHITENED FLAGPOLE IN THE OUTFIELD, LIFTING SADLY NOW AND THEN TO FLAP IN THE SOFT BREEZE THAT SWEEPS IN AND ACROSS THE SILENT DESERTED GRANDSTANDS. BUT DOWN ON THE GREEN PLAYING FIELD, ILLUMINATED BY THE COLD MOONLIGHT, ARE FIGURES IN BASEBALL UNIFORMS. EACH IN ITS POSIT-ON, WAITING. WAITING FOR THE WORDS.

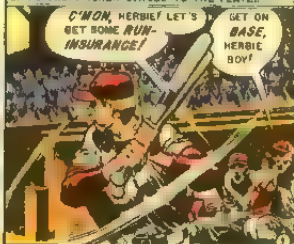
PLAY BALL!



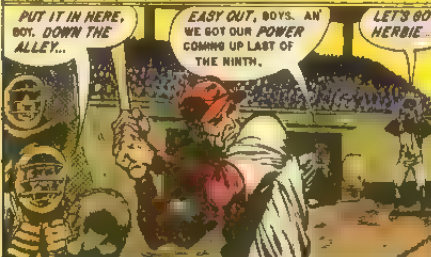
WHAT GOES ON, YOU ASK? WHY THIS MIDNIGHT GAME IN THE MOONLIT CENTRAL CITY BALL PARK? COME BACK WITH ME TO LAST SEASON. TO THE FINAL DAYS OF THIS BUSH-LEAGUE PENNANT RACE... TO A BRISK SEPTEMBER AFTERNOON. DRY BROWNED LEAVES, CHASED BY A FALL WIND THAT CARRIED A PREVIEW OF WINTER WITH ITS CHILL, TUMBLED ACROSS *BAYVILLE'S* BALL PARK AS CENTRAL CITY'S STAR PITCHER STRODE TO THE PLATE...

C'MON, HERBIE! LET'S GET SOME RUN-INSURANCE!

GET ON BASE, HERBIE BOY!



IT WAS THE PLAYOFF GAME BETWEEN CENTRAL CITY AND BAYVILLE. THE TWO TEAMS HAD ENDED THE SEASON TIED FOR FIRST PLACE AND THIS GAME WOULD DECIDE THE PENNANT WINNER. VISITING CENTRAL CITY WAS LEADING THEIR BAYVILLE HOSTS BY ONE PRECIOUS RUN IN THE FIRST OF THE NINTH. THERE WERE TWO OUT AS HERBIE BATTEN CAME TO BAT...



BAYVILLE'S HURLER WOUND UP. BIG HERBIE WATCHED AS THE PITCH CAME STEAMING IN...



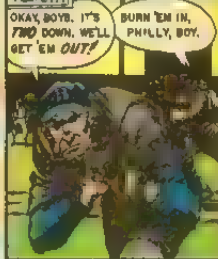
THE PITCH WAS HIDE. HERBIE MOVED TOWARD IT, THEN TURNED AWAY. THE BALL STRUCK HIS S-BOW...



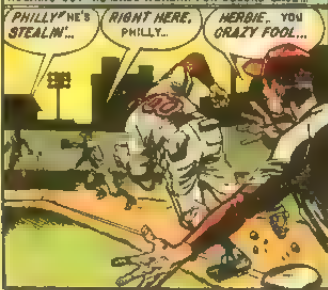
THE BAYVILLE TEAM CROWDED AROUND THE UMPIRE, PROTESTING HIS CALL.



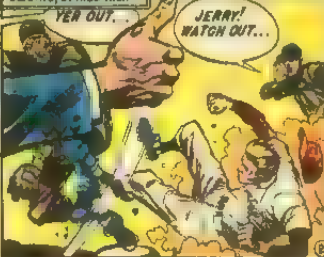
THE UMPIRE JUST SHOOK HIS HEAD. HIS DECISION STOOD. HERBIE TROTTERED DOWN TO FIRST, AND CENTRAL CITY'S LEAD-OFF MAN CAME TO THE PLATE...



BAYVILLE'S PITCHER, PHIL BRADY, WOUND UP. SUDDENLY, HERBIE, ON FIRST, DID SOMETHING STRANGE FOR A BIG WULKING GUY HE MADE A BREAK FOR SECOND BASE...



PHIL SPUN AROUND AND LET GO. JERRY DEEGAN, BAYVILLE'S SECOND BASEMAN AND STAR PLAYER, LEAGUE LEADER IN HITS AND HOME RUNS, WAS COVERING. THE PED WAS WAY AHEAD OF HERBIE, BUT HERBIE CAME IN SLIDING, SPIKES HIGH.





JERRY DEEGAN WENT DOWN AS THE SPIKES BLASHED INTO HIS CALF, AND HE FELT THEIR BURNING METAL SHARPNESS. HIS TEAMMATES WERE RUNNING NOW.

JERRY! YUH HURT?

Y'OKAY, JERRY?

THAT WAS A CHEAP TRICK, SATTEN.



JERRY GOT TO HIS FEET. HE LOOKED DOWN AT HIS TORN SWEAT SOX AND THE TINY TRICKLE OF SCARLET OOOZING FROM THE SPIKE-WOUND.

I'M OKAY! IT'S ONLY A SCRATCH!

SORRY, DEEGAN!

YOU DID THAT ON PURPOSE, BATTER.



THE BIG CENTRAL CITY PITCHER SMYKED...

IT'S ALL IN THE SAME CHUM, IF'M DEEGAN DROPPED THE BALL, I O BE SAFE!

YOU WERE BEAT BY A MILE, AND YOU KNEW IT, SATTEN.



THE UMPIRES CALLED 'PLAY BALL' AND THE GAME RESUMED. CENTRAL CITY, STILL LEADING BY ONE RUN, TOOK TO THE FIELD. CENTRAL'S FIRST BASE COACH WALKED SATTEN TO THE MOUND.

I DIDN'T GIVE YOU NO STEAL SIGN, SATTEN! WHAT WAS THE IDEA?

MY IDEA, EDDIE! DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT! THE PEN-NANT'S AS GOOD AS OURS!



IN BAYVILLE'S DUGOUT, DOC WHITE CLEANED DEEGAN'S SPIKE WOUND AND TAPED IT...

IS HE OKAY, DOC? WILL HE BE ABLE TO BAT?

SURE! JUST A SLIGHT CUT!

OKAY, BAYVILLE. LET'S GET A BATTER OUT HERE.



NOW IT WAS THE LAST OF THE NINTH. A HOME RUN WOULD TIE THE GAME FOR BAYVILLE, AND WITH ONE ON, IT WOULD MEAN VICTORY AND THE PENNANT. AND JERRY DEEGAN WAS DUE TO BAT FOURTH. THE FIRST BATTER STRODE TO THE PLATE...

GET ON, AL! JUST GET ON. JERRY'LL PUT ONE INTO THE STANDS!

YEAH, BOY! I FEEL IT



BUT AL GROUNDED SADLY TO SHORT, ONE OUT. THE SECOND BATTER MOVED INTO THE BOX.

WAIT 'IN OUT, BILL! HE'S TIRIN'!

S'MATTER, JERRY?

HUH? OH, NUTHIN'!



BUT BILL POPPED OUT TO RIGHT TWO OUT. THE THIRD BATTER STEPPED INTO THE BATTER'S BOX.



HULKING SATTEN WORKED. PUMPED. DELIVERED MEL SWUNG AT THE FIRST PITCH LINING IT TO DEEP LEFT.



THE CROWD ROARED. MEL PULLED UP AT SECOND. IN THE DUGOUT, BAYVILLE'S BOYS WERE ON THEIR FEET ALL BUT JERRY DEEGAN.



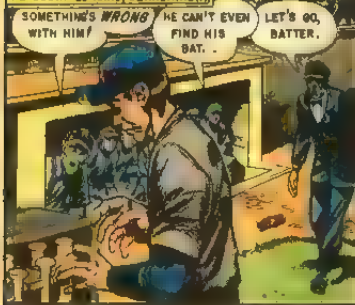
JERRY'S EYES WERE GLASSY BRADY SHOOK HIM.



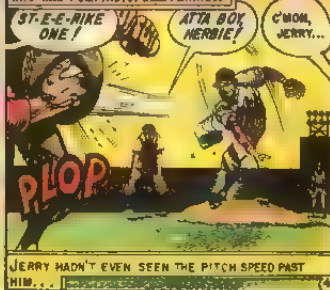
JERRY GOT TO HIS FEET... SLOWLY. THE DUGOUT STEPS REELED AS HE STUMBLER UP.



JERRY MOVED TO THE BAT RACK. SLOWLY PAINFULLY. HE SQUINTED HARD, SEARCHING...



FINALLY, FINDING HIS FAVORITE WOOD, JERRY MOVED INTO THE BATTER'S BOX HE STARED OUT AT SATTEN WHO WAS PUMPING... DELIVERING...



THE SECOND PITCH WAS SLOW, STRAIGHT DOWN THE MIDDLE. REAL HOME RUN MEAT. JERRY BEEMED TO SENSE IT AND SWUNG WILDLY.



ST-EEE-RIKE TWO!

SOMETHIN'S WRONG WITH HIM, I TELL YUH! HE MISSED IT BY A MILE

TO JERRY, IT WAS GETTING DARK. HIS EYES HADN'T MADE OFF SATYEN'S UNIFORM AS HE PUMPED THEN.



HE SLUMPED TO THE GROUND AS SATYEN'S PITCH WENT BY.

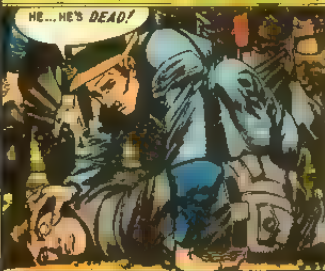


STRIKE THREE! YER OUT.

HEY!

HE'S FAINTED!

THE BALL GAME WAS OVER. CENTRAL CITY HAD WON THE CHAMPIONSHIP. DOC WHITE RUSHED TO DEEGAN'S SIDE AS THE REST OF THE BAYVILLE TEAM CROWDED AROUND.



HE... HE'S DEAD!

THE PARK WAS EMPTY NOW. BAYVILLE'S BROKEN-HEARTED FANS HAD FILED SILENTLY OUT. IN THE DRESSING ROOM, JERRY DEEGAN'S BODY LAY ON THE MLB-DOWN TABLE. DOC WHITE BENT OVER HIM.



IT MUST HAVE BEEN HIS HEART!

POOR DEEGAN!

HE WAS THE CHOKE THE GREATEST!

THEN, DOC WHITE'S FACE BLANCHED. HE GOT BUSY... WITH NEEDLES AND BOTTLES AND RUBBER TUBES. DEEGAN'S TEAMMATES WATCHED SILENTLY. FINALLY, THE DOC SPOKE. HIS VOICE WAS HUSKY... GRIM...



IT... IT WASN'T HIS HEART, BOYS! JERRY WAS POISONED. THIS IS... MURDER!

WHAT?

YOU SURE, DOC?

POSITIVE! HE DIED FROM A QUICK ACTING POISON WHICH, ONCE IT ENTERS YOUR BLOODSTREAM, KILLS YOU WITHIN FIFTEEN MINUTES!



BUT JERRY WAS OUT ON THE FIELD FIFTEEN MINUTES BEFORE HE DIED.

SURE! HE. HE. GOOD LORD!

FOR A MOMENT, IT WAS SO QUIET IN THE SAYVILLE DRESSING ROOM, YOU COULD HEAR A PIN DROP. THEN...

BATTEN!  
HERBIE  
BATTEN.

HE KNEW  
THAT IF  
JERRY GAVE  
UP IN THE  
NINTH, IT  
WOULD MEAN  
THE GAME!

THAT CRAZY  
MOVE! THAT  
STEAL! HE  
HAD NO  
CHANCE TO  
MAKE IT...

BATTEN  
SPIKED  
JERRY  
DELIB-  
ERATELY!

MUR-  
DERED  
HIM...  
WITH...

POIS-  
ONED  
SPIKES!

THE VISITING TEAM LOCKER ROOM WAS DESERTED. CENTRAL CITY'S BOYS, INCLUDING BATTEN, HAD GONE. ONLY THE TRAINER WAS LEFT... EMPTYING THE LOCKERS, AND PACKING THE EQUIPMENT AWAY.

WHICH LOCKER'D  
HERBIE BATTEN  
USE, MOE?

THAT ONE.  
HIS STUFF'S  
STILL IN IT...

WHILE THE OTHER PLAYERS KEPT MOE, THE TRAINER, BUSY, DOC WHITE MADE A FAST CHECK ON BATTEN'S SPIKES. LATER, BACK AT THE SAYVILLE DRESSING ROOM...

THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT  
IT! BATTEN'S OUR  
MURDERER. TRACES OF  
THE POISON ARE STILL  
ON HIS SPIKES.

THIS IS A  
JOB FOR THE  
POLICE.

NO! WAIT!  
LET'S TAKE  
CARE OF HIM  
OURSELVES...  
OUR WAY.

YES, FIENDS. HERBIE BATTEN HAD SO WANTED TO WIN THE PENNANT, NOT FOR CENTRAL CITY BUT FOR HIS OWN FAT EGO, THAT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NINTH, WHILE HIS TEAM WAS AT BAT, HE'D PAINTED HIS SPIKES WITH THE FAST-ACTING POISON. HE'D CARRIED THE POISON WITH HIM FOR JUST SUCH AN OCCASION. GETTING HIT WITH THE PITCH WAS EASY. THE SLIDE, EASIER AND THE JOB WAS DONE. AND ALL LAST WINTER, HERBIE'D THOUGHT HE'D GOTTEN AWAY WITH IT. HE'D PITCHED HIS TEAM TO VICTORY AND THE PENNANT. HE'D BEEN DECLARED A HERO. SOON IT WOULD BE THE BIG LEAGUES FOR HIM. SOON, HE'D BE FAMOUS. HE'D HAVE A NAME IMMORTALIZED IN THE ANNALE OF BASEBALL. THAT'S WHY, ON THE DAY BEFORE OPENING DAY...

... WHEN THE LETTER ARRIVED, HE FELL FOR THE INVITATION...

DEAR MR. BATTEN,

WE ARE A GROUP OF YOUR MOST AVID FOLLOWERS. IT IS OUR PLAN TO PLACE IN CENTRAL CITY BALL PARK A PLAQUE, CARRYING YOUR NAME, TO HONOR YOU AND YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS IN BASEBALL. PLEASE MEET US TONIGHT AT ELEVEN P.M. AT THE FIELD TO HELP DECIDE UPON WORDING AND PLACEMENT OF SAID TABLET.

THE HERBERT BATTEN  
COMMEMORATION COMMITTEE

HERBIE WENT. WHY NOT? THIS WAS WHAT HE WANTED ABOVE ALL ELSE. THIS WAS WHAT HE'D MURDERED FOR. HONOR. PRESTIGE. AT 11:00 P.M., HE WAS IN THE DESERTED BALL PARK, ON THE MOONLIT FIELD, WAITING.

HELLO,  
HERBIE...

WHAT THE...? BRADY! DOC WHITE!  
THE SAYVILLE TEAM. WHAT'S  
THIS ALL ABOUT?



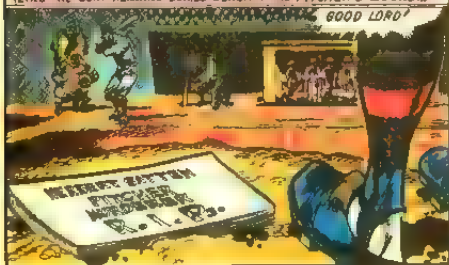
SO NOW YOU KNOW, FIENDS! NOW YOU KNOW *WHY* THERE IS A BALL GAME BEING PLAYED IN THE MOONLIGHT AT MIDNIGHT IN THE DESERTED CENTRAL CITY BALL PARK. LOOK *CLOSELY* SEE THIS *STRANGE* BASEBALL GAME! SEE THE LONG STRINGS OF PULPY INTESTINES THAT MARK THE BASE LINES, SEE THE TWO LUNGS AND THE LIVER THAT INDICATE THE BASES...THE HEART THAT IS HOME PLATE! SEE DOC WHITE BEND AND WHISK THE HEART WITH THE MANGY SCALP, YELLING



SEE THE BATTER COME TO THE PLATE SWINGING THE LEGS, THE ARMS, THEN THROWING ALL BUT ONE AWAY AND STANDING IN THE BOX WAITING FOR THE PITCHER TO HURL THE HEAD IN TO HIM. SEE THE CATCHER WITH THE TORSO STRAPPED ON AS A CHEST-PROTECTOR, THE INFELDERS WITH THEIR HAND-BITS, THE STOMACH-ROBIN-BAG, AND ALL THE OTHER PIECES OF EQUIPMENT THAT ONCE WAS CENTRAL CITY'S STAR PITCHER HERBIE SATTEN...



AND IN THE MORNING, WATCH THE FACES OF THE FANS AS THEY PACK THE PARK AND SEE THE GREEN GRASS NOW STAINED RED, AND SEE THE HASTILY SUBSTITUTED PITCHER STEP TO THE RUBBER AND STARE DOWN AT THE STONE PLAQUE EMBEDDED THERE WITH THE ENGRAVED WORDS MEMORIALIZING THE GORY REMAINS BURIED BENEATH THE PITCHER'S MOUND...



HEH, HEH! SO THAT'S MY YELP-YARN FOR THIS ISSUE, KIDDIES. HERBIE, THE PITCHER, WENT TO PIECES THAT NIGHT AND WAS TAKEN OUT...OUT OF EXISTENCE, THAT IS! THE PLAQUE TURNED OUT TO BE HIS GRAVE STONE, AND THE PITCHER'S MOUND HIS GRAVE! OH, BY THE WAY NEXT TIME YOU GO SEE CENTRAL CITY PLAY, BE CAREFUL WHERE YOU SIT THAT NIGHT ONE OF BAYVILLE'S BOYS HIT A HOMER, INTO THE STANDS. THEY NEVER FOUND THE...HEH, HEH 'BALL'! 'BYE, NOW. WE'LL ALL SEE YOU NEXT IN MY NAB, TALES FROM THE CRYPT!



# COUNTER-CLOCKWISE



SCREEN  
AND  
TOWN

IT WAS A SUMMER NIGHT IN 2026, I REMEMBER IT AS THOUGH IT WERE YESTERDAY. I WAS FIFTEEN AT THE TIME. DAD HAD COME HOME EARLY FROM HIS JOB AT THE ROCKET-PORT, AND WE'D GONE INTO TOWN TO TAKE IN A TRI-DIMENSIONAL IT HAD BEEN ONE OF THOSE OLD FASHIONED EASTERNS ABOUT GANGSTERS AND POLICE, A REAL CORNY CAR-OPERA. BUT DAD ENJOYED THEM, SO I DIDN'T MIND VERY MUCH.

DAD? I'D... I'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU. AFTER THIS IS OVER? MAN TO MAN.

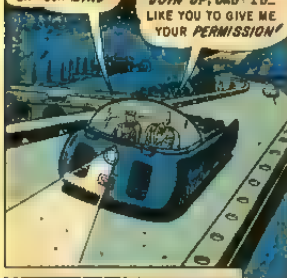
ALL RIGHT, RON! WE'LL BUZZ OUT INTO THE COUNTRY SOMEWHERE!



WHEN THE TRI-D WAS OVER, DAD AND I  
HOPPED INTO OUR ATOMIC CRUISER AND  
SPED OUT OF THE CITY...

WELL, RON? WHAT'S  
ON YOUR MIND?

I'D... I'D LIKE TO  
JOIN UP, DAD! I'D...  
LIKE YOU TO GIVE ME  
YOUR PERMISSION!



BUT FLYING A ROCKET  
SHIP IS DIFFERENT!  
BESIDES! WHAT WILL  
YOU DO... AFTERWARD?  
YOU'LL SPEND FIVE  
YEARS TRAINING...  
FIVE YEARS ON  
ACTIVE DUTY... AND  
THEN... YOU'LL BE  
WASHED UP  
FINISHED...

WELL, YOU'RE  
NOT WASHED  
UP, DAD!  
AND YOU  
FLEW 'EM...



YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND... NOT  
TILL YOU'VE BEEN OUT THERE!  
AND THEN IT'S TOO LATE! THEY  
GET HOLD OF YOU... THOSE STARS...  
AND PLANETS... AND THAT ENDLESS  
VASTNESS... AND THEY NEVER LET  
YOU GO! AND EVEN AFTER YOU  
STOP FLYING... THEY CALL TO YOU...  
AND... AND... GASP...

POP! WHAT IS  
IT? WHAT DO  
YOU SEE?



DAD'S FACE PALED! HE WAS SILENT FOR A MOMENT! THEN HE  
GUT THE PILE-ENERGIZER AND THE CRUISER SLOWED DOWN TO  
A STOP! HE LOOKED AT ME, AND I THOUGHT I SAW A TEAR IN  
HIS EYE...

ARE YOU SURE, RON? ARE  
YOU SURE YOU WANT TO  
DO IT... JOIN UP? IT'S A  
RISKY BUSINESS!  
YOU MIGHT BE

ANYTHING A FELLOW DOES IS  
RISKY TODAY, DAD! YOU RISK  
YOUR LIFE EVERY DAY DOWN AT  
THE PORT SERVICING THE  
SHIPS! WELL, I WANT TO FLY 'EM.



LOOK, SON! ONCE  
YOU'VE BEEN OUT  
THERE... OUT IN  
SPACE... YOU'LL  
NEVER BE SATISFIED  
WITH ANYTHING ELSE!  
AND AT TWENTY-SIX,  
A ROCKET PILOT  
IS RETIRED... TOO OLD!

BUT, AT  
LEAST  
YOU HAD  
THOSE  
FEW  
YEARS...



YES, BUT SPACE  
TRAVEL GETS INTO  
YOUR BLOOD, SON!  
IT BECOMES YOUR  
LIFE! THEN ONE  
DAY, THEY COME AND  
TELL YOU YOUR LIFE  
IS OVER... JUST  
LIKE THAT!

YOUR LIFE  
WASN'T OVER!  
YOU MARRIED  
NOW... YOU  
BOUGHT A  
HOME... AND  
YOU HAD  
ME...



THERE WAS A TINY NEEDLE OF FLAME IN THE SKY...  
POINTING EARTHWARD... RUSHING DOWN AT US

IT'S A SHIP, RON! A  
SPACE SHIP! AND IT'S  
NOT AN EARTH  
SHIP!

POP!  
ARE YOU SURE?



THE FLAME GREW LARGER AND ANGRIER AS IT CAME AT US

I KNOW EVERY  
ROCKET-ENGINE  
IN THE FLEET...  
AND NO ENGINE  
HAS AN EXHAUST  
LIKE THAT!

POP!  
COULD IT...  
WOULD IT  
BE...?

...AND SOON WE COULD SEE THE  
GLEAMING SHAPE OF THE ONCOMING  
ROCKET-SHIP

THERE'S NO OTHER  
LIFE IN THIS SOLAR  
SYSTEM! WE KNOW  
THAT NOW! IT HAS  
TO BE...

VISITORS  
FROM  
ANOTHER  
STAR'S  
SOLAR  
SYSTEM!

AND EVEN AS IT THUNDERED  
ABOVE US DROPPING TOWARD  
EARTH, I SHUDDERED...

C'MON, SON!  
IT'S LANDING!

WAIT, POP!  
THEY...THEY...  
MIGHT BE  
DANGEROUS...  
HOSTILE...

MY FATHER HESITATED FOR A MOMENT, THEN  
RUSHED BACK TO THE CRUISER...

YOU'RE RIGHT, RON! I'VE  
GOT A BLASTER IN HERE!  
WE'D BETTER NOT TAKE  
ANY CHANCES!

IT'S DOWN, POP!  
THE SHIP'S DOWN...

DAD SLIPPED THE BLASTER FROM ITS RACK AND WE  
TROTTED ACROSS THE FIELD TOWARD THE NEWLY  
ARRIVED ALIEN SHIP! IT STOOD AMID THE HEAT AND  
SMOKE OF ITS SILENCED ROCKET ENGINES...WAITING...

LOOK, DAD!  
A FORT IN  
OPENING!

SOMETHING'S  
COMING  
OUT!

I STOPPED DEAD IN MY TRACKS AT WHAT I SAW!  
I COULD HEAR POP SUCK IN HIS BREATH AS HE  
CAUGHT SIGHT OF IT TOO...

GOOD LORD! POP! POP!

IT WAS HORRIBLE...THE MOST HORRIBLE CREATURE  
I'D EVER SEEN! IT RUSHED AT US, ITS EYES BURNING,  
ITS LOATHESOME FLESH CRAWLING...SCREAMING...

KILL IT, POP!  
KILL IT!

STAND  
BACK,  
RON!



THE SUMMER NIGHT SILENCE WAS SHATTERED WITH THE EAR-SPLITTING REPORT FROM DAD'S URANIUM-BLASTER! THE DISGUSTING THING, RUSHING AT US WITH HATE AND FIRE IN ITS EYES, PITCHED FORWARD, FALLING AT MY FEET.

CHOKE

KEEP AWAY FROM IT, RON! IT MAY NOT BE DEAD!



WE WAITED, BUT NO OTHER HORRIBLE ALIENS CAME FROM THE SHIP. WE WAITED FOR A LONG TIME, LOOKING UP AT THE SKY. BUT NO OTHER CRUISERS BEGAN TO ARRIVE.

WHAT'S GOING ON? WHAT HAPPENED?

IT WAS AN ALIEN SHIP! IT CARRIED A HOSTILE ALIEN! I KILLED IT!



THE THING TWITCHED, LIFTED ITS UGLY HEAD, LOOKED AT ME FOR A BURNING MOMENT, THEN CLOSED ITS EYES.

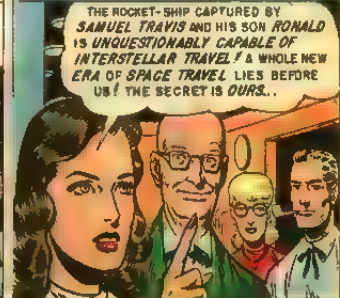
IT'S DEAD NOW, POP!

RON! RON, DO YOU REALIZE WHAT THIS MEANS? THAT SHIP! THAT SHIP HOLDS THE KEY TO INTERSTELLAR TRAVEL! AND NOW IT'S OURS!



NEEDLESS TO SAY, DAD BECAME A NATIONAL HERO. THE CAPTURED ALIEN SHIP WAS EXAMINED BY SCIENTISTS AND ROCKET ENGINEERS. THEY ANNOUNCED:

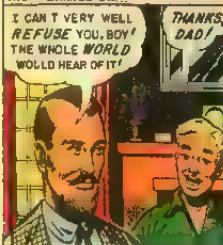
THE ROCKET-SHIP CAPTURED BY SAMUEL TRAVIS AND HIS SON RONALD IS UNQUESTIONABLY CAPABLE OF INTERSTELLAR TRAVEL! A WHOLE NEW ERA OF SPACE TRAVEL LIES BEFORE US! THE SECRET IS OURS...



NATURALLY, IN MY INTERVIEWS WITH REPORTERS, I EXPRESSED MY DESIRES TO JOIN THE ROCKET FLEET! ON MY SIXTEENTH BIRTHDAY, DAD RELUCTANTLY GRANTED HIS PERMISSION.

I CAN'T VERY WELL REFUSE YOU, BOY! THE WHOLE WORLD WOULD HEAR OF IT!

THANKS, DAD!



AND SO, I ENLISTED...

ROCKET CADET RONALD TRAVIS REPORTING, SIR!

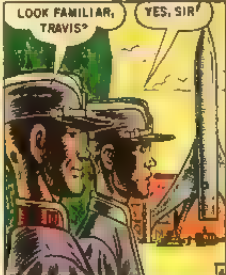
THIS WAY, TRAVIS! I'LL TAKE YOU TO YOUR QUARTERS.



THAT FIRST DAY MY CADET OFFICER LED ME PAST THE ALIEN ROCKET MY FATHER AND I HAD 'CAPTURED' FOUR MONTHS BEFORE.

LOOK FAMILIAR, TRAVIS?

YES, SIR!



ON FIVE YEARS FROM MY SIXTEENTH TO TWENTY-FIVE BIRTHDAY, I WAS TRAINED.

LET'S GO, TRAVIS!  
KEEP THOSE LEGS  
STRAIGHT OUT!  
TO THE TOP...LET'S  
GO.



THE NEWLY DISCOVERED  
INTER-STELLAR DRIVE  
IS A COMBINATION OF  
MAGNETIC FIELD  
AMPLIFICATION AND...



CADET TRAVIS! GIVE  
ME THE APPROACH  
AND LET-DOWN PRO-  
CEDURE FOR A PLANET  
HAVING A DENSITY OF  
5.32 AND AN ATMOS-  
PHERIC PRESSURE AT  
IT'S SURFACE OF 201  
LBS PER SQUARE INCH.



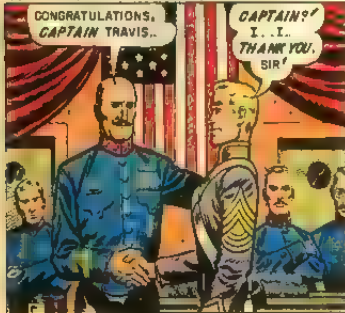
CADET TRAVIS! REPORT  
TO THE NORTH LAUNCHING  
SITE FOR **SOLO**...



AND THEN, BEFORE I KNEW IT, I WAS GRADUATED...

CONGRATULATIONS,  
CAPTAIN TRAVIS...

CAPTAIN?!  
I...I...  
THANK YOU,  
SIR!



CAPTAIN, DAD? I MADE  
CAPTAIN...RIGHT OFF  
THE BAT!

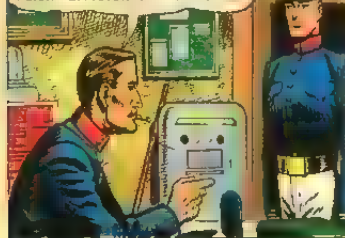
I PROUD OF YOU,  
SON! PROUD OF YOU!



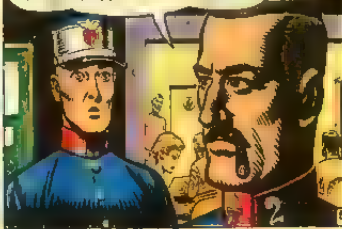
A MONTH'S FURLOUGH HOME THEN ASSIGNMENT...

CAPTAIN TRAVIS! FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS,  
YOU HAVE BEEN SPECIFICALLY TRAINED  
FOR ONE PURPOSE! YOU ARE HEREBY  
ASSIGNED TO THE INTERSTELLAR  
FLIGHT DIVISION OF THE FLEET

YES,  
SIR!



NOW THIS MAY COME AS A SHOCK TO YOU, TRAVIS  
WE'VE KEPT IT A SECRET FOR SOME TIME BUT THE  
FLEET ENGINEERS HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO COPY  
OR EVEN SOLVE THE INTERSTELLAR SPACE-  
DRIVE USED IN THE ROCKET SHIP YOU AND YOUR  
FATHER CAPTURED! THAT SHIP IS THE ONLY SHIP  
IN THIS WING! AND IT'S YOURS...



ON A JUNE AFTERNOON IN 2032 I WAS BRIEFED ON MY FIRST MISSION...

YOUR JOB, TRAVIS, WILL BE TO FIND THE PLANET THAT THIS SHIP CAME FROM! YOU WILL NOT LAND... MERELY OBSERVE! YOUR ROUTE HAS BEEN Laid OUT! ALPHA CENTAURI, OUR NEAREST STAR, WILL BE YOUR FIRST DESTINATION! WE DO NOT KNOW IF IT HAS A SOLAR SYSTEM! FROM THERE, YOU WILL PROCEED TO...

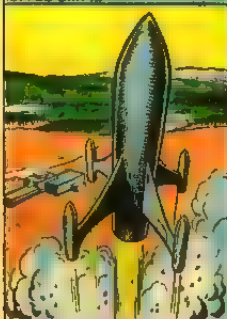
AND WHAT IF I DO NOT FIND THE PLANET, SIR?

YOU WILL RETURN TO EARTH BY 2037! ANOTHER WILL TAKE YOUR PLACE! YOU KNOW THE RETIREMENT RULES!

YES, SIR!



ON JULY 3RD, 2032, I TOOK OFF FROM EARTH IN THE ALIEN SPACE SHIP...



BEYOND PLUTO, THE OUTERMOST PLANET IN OUR SOLAR SYSTEM, I LOST RADIO CONTACT AS WAS EXPECTED...

TRAVIS... CALLING FLEET STATION PLUTO! TRAVIS... CALLING IT'S NO USE!



AND SIX MONTHS LATER I NEARED ALPHA CENTAURI...

TWO PLANETS! ALPHA CENTAURI DOES HAVE A SOLAR SYSTEM!



I CIRCLED THE PLANET OF ALPHA CENTAURI'S SOLAR SYSTEM. THE OUTER ONE WAS FRIGID ... COVERED WITH ICE AND SNOW...

NO LIFE DOWN THERE!



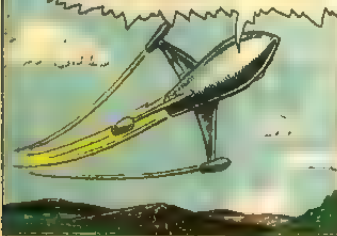
THE ONE CLOSEST TO THE STAR WAS GREEN... LIKE EARTH...

FOLIAGE! CLOUDS! THIS ONE COULD BE IT! I KNOW I'VE BEEN ORDERED NOT TO... BUT I'M GOING IN! I'M GOING TO LAND!

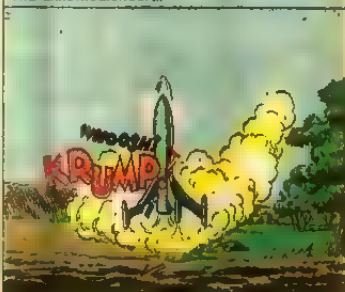


I CHECKED MY READINGS CAREFULLY. ATMOSPHERIC  
PRESSURE. DENSITY. ROTATION.

ROTATION! ? GOOD LORD! THIS PLANET  
ROTATES COUNTER-CLOCKWISE EAST  
TO WEST EXACTLY OPPOSITE TO THE  
WAY EARTH ROTATES! WELL! HERE GOES...



IT WAS TRICKY... TOO TRICKY! THE PLANET'S  
REVERSE ROTATION CONFUSED ME! I MESSED UP  
THE LANDING... BADLY...



WHEN I CHECKED MY WATCH TO  
NOTE THE TIME OF LANDING IN THE  
LOG, MY BLOOD FROZE. .

MY WATCH! THE  
SECOND HAND! IT'S  
THE SAME!



IT WAS TRUE! MY WATCH HAD  
COMPLETELY REVERSED ITS  
ACTION.

IT—IT MUST HAVE  
SOME THING TO DO WITH  
THE PLANET'S REVERSE  
ROTATION!



I EXAMINED THE SHIP! IT'D DAMAGED THE REAR FINS! I COULDN'T TAKE OFF..

IT'LL TAKE ME MONTHS  
TO FIX THESE FINS! MAYBE  
A YEAR...



AND THEN IT HAPPENED, ABOUT SIX MONTHS  
AFTER MY CRASH LANDING, I NOICED THEM.

SORES ALL OVER MY  
BODY! MY HANDS!  
MY FACE...



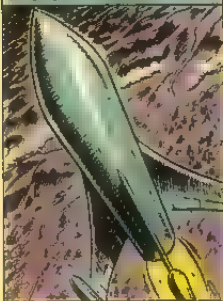
I WAS SICK! THE SORES GOT WORSE! I BEGAN TO  
PASS OUT! I HAD TO GIVE UP WORKING ON THE SHIP

I'VE BEEN HERE...OVER A YEAR!  
I...I HAVEN'T THE STRENGTH  
TO WORK! AND THESE BONES...





THE OUTBREAKS ON MY SKIN  
FESTERED AND I RAN HIGH FEV-  
ERS! I WORKED LESS AND LESS  
ON THE SHIP! TWO YEARS PASSED!  
FIVE! EIGHT! THEN



YES! OVER TEN YEARS AFTER MY  
CRASH LANDING, I WAS FINALLY  
ABLE TO TAKE OFF FOR EARTH!  
WHAT A WELCOME SIGHT IT WAS  
WHEN IT APPEARED ON THE VIEW  
SCREEN



I LOOKED DOWN AT THE YOUNG  
BOY AND THE MAN RUSHING  
TOWARD THE SHIP... AND I  
WANTED TO CRY...



BUT I DID NOT REALIZE HOW HORRIBLE I MUST  
HAVE LOOKED TO THEM! I'D GROWN USED TO WHAT  
THE FESTERING DISEASE HAD DONE TO ME THERE.  
ON THAT BACKWARD PLANET! I SAW THE FEAR AND  
LOATHING IN THEIR EYES...



NOR DID I REALIZE THAT I'D LOST THE POWER OF  
SPEECH! ALL THAT ERUPTED FROM MY THROAT WAS  
A SCREAM, NOT WHAT I'D MEANT TO SAY...



RON! THE BOY'S NAME WAS RON! AND THE OLDER  
ONE I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT! THE OLDER ONE WAS  
MY FATHER! AND HE WAS AIMING HIS URANIUM  
BLASTER AT ME, FIRING IT...



I FELL AT THE BOY'S FEET! AND I KNEW... I KNEW...



AS THE BLACKNESS OF DEATH CLOSED OVER ME I  
REALIZED THAT TIME, TOO, WAS REVERSED ON THAT  
BACKWARD PLANET! MY WATCH HAD TOLD ME THAT  
I'D GONE BACK IN TIME TEN YEARS OR MORE! AND  
I'D BROUGHT THAT SHIP TO EARTH! I'D BEEN THAT  
MONSTER MY FATHER HAD KILLED! BUT... THEN...  
WHO BUILT... THE SHIP...



# ZERO HOUR

IT WAS AN INTERESTING FACT THAT THE FURY AND BUSTLE OCCURRED ONLY AMONG THE YOUNGER CHILDREN, THE OLDER ONES, THOSE TEN YEARS AND MORE, DISDAINED THE AFFAIR AND MARCHED SCORNFULLY OFF ON HIKES, OR PLAYED A MORE DIGNIFIED GAME OF HIDE AND SEEK ON THEIR OWN. MEANWHILE, PARENTS GAME AND WENT IN CHROMIUM BEETLE CARS. REPAIRMEN GAME TO REPAIR VACUUM ELEVATORS IN HOUSES, TO FIX FLUTTERING TELEVISION SETS, OR HAMMER UPON STUBBORN FOOD DELIVERY TUBES. THE ADULT CIVILIZATION PASSED AND REPASSED THE BUSY YOUNGSTERS... IGNORING THEM...

THIS... AND THIS... AND THIS. DO THAT, AND BRING THAT OVER HERE, NO! HERE, NINNY! RIGHT NOW, GET BACK WHILE I FIX THIS, THERE! SEE?

ADAPTED FROM A STORY BY  
RAY BRADBURY

THE CHILDREN CATAPULTED ACROSS GREEN LAWNS, SHOUTING AT EACH OTHER. MINK RAN INTO HER HOUSE, ALL DIRT AND SWEAT.

HEAVENS, MINK, WHAT'S GOING ON?

THE MOST EXCITING GAME EVER!

FOR HER SEVEN YEARS, MINK WAS LOUD AND STRONG AND DEFINITE. HER MOTHER, MRS MORRIS, WATCHED HER AS SHE YANKED OUT DRAWERS AND RATTLED PANS AND TOOLS INTO A LARGE SACK.

STOP AND GET YOUR BREATH. I'M ALL RIGHT! OKAY IF I TAKE THESE THINGS, MOM?

ALL RIGHT! BUT DON'T DENT THEM. ER... WHAT'S THE NAME OF THE GAME, DEAR?

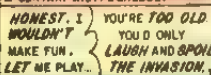
INVASION!



IN ALMOST EVERY YARD ON THE STREET, CHILDREN BROUGHT OUT KNIVES AND FORKS AND POKERS AND OLD STOVEPIPES AND CAN OPENERS...



TWELVE-YEAR-OLD JOSEPH CONNERS SURVEYED THE YOUNGER CHILDREN WITH RELUCTANCE AND A CERTAIN WISTFULNESS...



JOSEPH WALKED OFF SLOWLY HE KEPT LOOKING BACK, ALL DOWN THE BLOCK MINK TALKED EARNESTLY TO SOMEONE NEAR THE ROSE BUSH...THOUGH THERE WAS NO ONE THERE. ANNA TOOK NOTES ON A PAD.



MINK'S MOTHER, FROM HER UP-STAIRS WINDOW, GAZED DOWN...



OH, THANKS, MRS. MORRIS!

THAT'S ALL RIGHT ANNA!

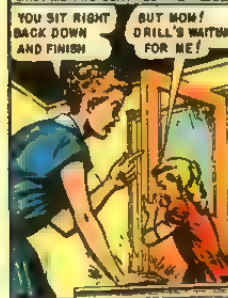
NOW...BEAM! THEN...FOUR-NINE-SEVEN-A-AND-8-AND-X...



MINK'S MOTHER WITHDREW LAUGHING, TO DUST THE HALL WITH AN ELECTRO-DUSTER MAGNET...



AT LUNCH, MINK GULPED MILK AT ONE TOSS AND WAS AT THE DOOR. MRS. MORRIS SLAPPED THE TABLE.



DRILL? WHAT A PECULIAR NAME? WHO'S DRILL?



WHO'S INVADING WHAT?



MRS. MORRIS HID HER MOUTH  
BEHIND HER HAND...

YOU'RE LAUGHING!  
SLEEP YOU'D...  
YOU'D KILL DRILL  
AND EVERYBODY

I...I  
DIDN'T MEAN  
TO, MINK. SO...  
SO DRILL'S A  
MARTIAN?

UH-HUH! AND HE'S HAD A HARD  
TIME. THEY COULDN'T FIGURE A  
WAY TO ATTACK EARTH, DRILL  
SAYS IN ORDER TO MAKE A 6000  
FIGHT, YOU GOT TO HAVE  
A NEW WAY OF SUR-  
PRISING PEOPLE! AND  
YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE  
HELP... FROM YOUR ENEMY!

A  
FIFTH  
COLUMN.  
EH?

YEAH! THAT'S WHAT DRILL  
SAID. AND THEY COULDN'T  
FIGURE A WAY TO SURPRISE  
EARTH OR GET HELP... UNTIL,  
ONE DAY, THEY THOUGHT OF  
THE CHILDREN!

WELL!

AND THEY THOUGHT OF  
HOW GROWNUPS ARE SO  
BUSY THEY NEVER PAY  
ATTENTION TO CHILDREN!  
AND THEN THERE'S THE  
DIM-DIMS!

DIM-  
DIMS!

DIMENSIONS!  
FOUR OF 'EM!  
AND THERE'S SOME-  
THING ABOUT KIDS  
UNDER NINE, AND  
BATH... YOU'D  
BETTER HURRY  
ALONG...

WELL, IF  
YOU WANT  
TO HAVE YOUR  
INVASION  
BEFORE YOUR  
BATH... YOU'D  
BETTER HURRY  
ALONG...

DRILL SAYS I WON'T HAVE  
TO TAKE BATHS AFTER  
THE INVASION. NO MORE  
BATHS... AND WE CAN  
STAY UP TILL TEN O'CLOCK  
TO WATCH TELEVISION...  
AND GO TO TWO MOVIES  
ON SATURDAY 'STEAD OF  
ONE... AND HAVE ALL  
THE COMICS WE WANT...

WELL...  
MR. DRILL  
BETTER  
MIND HIS  
P'S  
AND Q'S  
I'LL  
CALL UP  
HIS  
MOTHER  
AND...

DRILL SAYS PARENTS ARE  
DANGEROUS. 'CAUSE WHY?  
'CAUSE YOU DON'T BELIEVE  
IN MARTIANS! THEY'RE  
GOING TO LET US RUN  
THE WORLD! THE KIDS...

THAT'S  
NICE!  
NOW,  
RUN  
OUT  
AND  
PLAY

MINK WENT TO THE DOOR...

MOM! WHAT'S  
IM-PRES-  
SION-ABLE  
MEAN?

WHY, T MEANS...  
IT MEANS... TO  
BE A CHILD,  
DEAR

MINK RAN OUT, THEN STUCK HER  
HEAD BACK IN

MOM! I'LL BE SURE  
YOU WON'T BE HURT  
MUCH REALLY!

WELL  
THANKS!

AT FOUR O'CLOCK, THE AUDIO-VISOR BUZZED. MARY MORRIS FLIPPED THE TAB AND THE SCREEN LIT UP

HELLO, HELEN! THIS IS A SURPRISE! HELLO, MARY. I AM TIRED. NOW ARE THINGS IN NEW YORK? THE CHILDREN UNDERFOOT YOU LOOK TIRED!

MY MINK, TOO, THE SUPER-INVASION!

ARE YOUR KIDS PLAYING THAT GAME TOO?

LORD, YES WERE WE THIS BAD WHEN WE WERE KIDS. HELEN?

WORSE DON'T KNOW HOW MY PARENTS PUT UP WITH ME I GUESS PARENTS LEARN TO SHUT THEIR EARS!

A SILENCE... WHAT'S WRONG, MARY?

EH? OH, NOTHING. JUST THINKING ABOUT SHUTTING EARS AND SUCH. NEVER MIND WHERE WERE WE?

MY BOY TIM'S GOT A CRUSH ON SOME GUY NAMED... DRILL I THINK IT IS!

MUST BE A NEW PASS-WORD. MINK LIKES HIM TOO

DIDN'T KNOW IT HAD GOTTEN AS FAR SOUTH AS PHILADELPHIA, MARY! I TALKED TO MY SISTER IN BOSTON AND SHE SAID HER KIDS ARE WILD ABOUT THIS NEW GAME!

IT.. IT MUST BE SWEEP-ING THE COUNTRY!

AT THIS MOMENT MINK TROTTED INTO THE KITCHEN MARY MORRIS TURNED FROM THE AUDIO-VISOR...

WHAT'S THAT YOU HAVE THERE, MINK?

A YO-YO, MOM. WATCH.

MINK FLUNG THE YO-YO DOWN ITS STRING REACHING THE END, IT VANISHED

SEE?

GASP

DIBBLING HER FINGER, MINK MADE THE YO-YO REAPPEAR AND ZIP UP THE STRING...

D-DO THAT AGA N?

CAN'T! ZERO HOUR'S FIVE O'CLOCK! 'BYE!

ON THE AUDIO-VISOR HELEN

LAUGHED TIM BROUGHT ONE OF THOSE YO-YOS IN THIS MORNING, MARY. WHEN I GOT CURIOUS, HE SAID HE WOULDN'T SHOW IT TO ME. AND WHEN I TRIED TO WORK IT, FINALLY, IT WOULDN'T WORK!



MRS MORRIS WHISPERED

YOU'RE NOT IMPRESSIONABLE, HELEN!



NEVER MIND

SOMETHING I THOUGHT OF. CAN I HELP YOU HELEN?

I WANTED TO GET THAT BLACK AND WHITE CAKE RECIPE



THE HOUR DROWE BY. THE DAY WANE. THE SUN LOWERED IN THE PEACEFUL BLUE SKY ONE LITTLE GIRL RAN OFF CRYING

MINK, WAS THAT PEGGY ANN CRYING? YEAH, SHE'S A SCAREBABY. WE WON'T LET HER PLAY, NOW SHE'S GETTING TOO OLD TO PLAY.



MINK WAS BENT OVER IN THE YARD NEAR THE ROSE BUSH

I GUESS SHE DREW UP ALL OF A SUDDEN MINK'D DID YOU HIT PEGGY ANN?



NO HONEST YOU ASK HER. IT WAS SOMETHING WELL, SHE'S JUST A SCAREDY PANTS, GOLLY. GOLLY!

WHAT'S WRONG?



THE RING OF CHILDREN DREW IN AROUND MINK WHERE SHE SCOWLED AT HER WORK WITH SPOONS AND A KIND OF SQUARE SHAPED ARRANGEMENT OF HAMMERS AND PIPES.

DRILL'S STUCK HALF-WAY? HALF-WAY?



IF WE COULD ONLY GET HIM ALL THE WAY THROUGH, IT'D BE EASIER. THEN ALL THE OTHERS COULD COME THROUGH AFTER HIM!

CAN I HELP?



NO M. THANKS. I'LL FIX IT

ALL RIGHT, DEAR. HALF AN HOUR MORE THEN BATH-TIME





MRS. MORRIS WENT BACK INSIDE. TIME PASSED, A CURIOUS, WAITING SILENCE CAME UPON THE STREET, DEEPENING...



THE VOICE-GLOCK SANG SOFTLY IN A QUIET MUSICAL VOICE, THEN PURRED AWAY IN SILENCE. MRS. MORRIS CHUCKLED IN HER THROAT.



MR. MORRIS'S BEETLE CAR HUMMED INTO THE DRIVEWAY. HE GOT OUT, STOOD FOR A MOMENT WATCHING THE CHILDREN, THEN CAME INSIDE...



MRS. MORRIS LISTENED. THE CHILDREN WERE SILENT... TOO SILENT. MR. MORRIS EMPTIED HIS PIPE...



A BUZZING SOUND... MARY GOT UP SUDDENLY, HER EYES WIDENING...



THE BUZZING CONTINUED...



JUST THE SAME, YOU'D BETTER TELL THEM TO QUIT. IT'S AFTER FIVE. TELL THEM... HEH, HEH... TELL THEM TO PUT OFF THEIR INVASION UNTIL TOMORROW...



THE BUZZING GREW LOUDER



THE EXPLOSION...



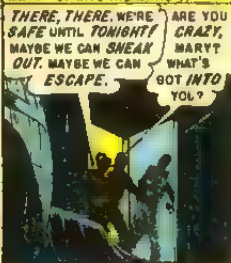
THE HOUSE SHOOK WITH A DULL SOUND. THERE WERE OTHER EXPLOSIONS IN OTHER YARDS ON OTHER STREETS...



THERE WAS NO TIME TO ARGUE WITH HENRY. LET HIM THINK HER INSANE! SHRIEKING, SHE RAN UPSTAIRS...



ANOTHER EXPLOSION OUTSIDE. THE CHILDREN SCREAMED WITH DELIGHT AS IF AT A GREAT FIREWORKS DISPLAY. HENRY RAN AFTER MARY UP INTO THE ATTIC...



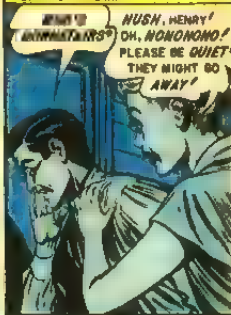
SHE WAS BABBLING WILD STUFF NOW. IT CAME OUT OF HER. ALL THE SUBCONSCIOUS SUSPICIONS AND FEAR. SHE BLAMMED THE DOOR. LOCKED IT. FLUNG THE KEY INTO A FAR, CLUTTERED CORNER...



BELOW THEM, MINK'S VOICE. THEN FOOTSTEPS CAME INTO THE HOUSE. HEAVY FOOTSTEPS...



HEAVY FEET. TWENTY, THIRTY, FORTY OF THEM...



HEAVY, VERY HEAVY FOOTSTEPS CAME UP THE STAIRS. MINK LEADING THEM. THEY TREMBLED TOGETHER IN SILENCE IN THE ATTIC. MR. AND MRS. MORRIS, THEY STOOD SHIVERING IN THE DARK SILENCE...



A LITTLE HUMMING SOUND, THE ATTIC LOCK MELTED. THE DOOR OPENED. MINK PEERED INSIDE...TALL BLUE SHADOWS BEHIND HER





# THE ASHTRAY

The graying light was even older by the time it struggled through the thirteen years' accumulation of cobwebs that festooned the wall over Professor Quagmire Bog's workbench. He sat there, high up in the ozone of his mountain-top laboratory, munching a withered apple.

Quagmire flipped the core into an immense brass ashtray nearby. For years, the patient concave receptacle had contained thousands of odds and ends in silence. During thirteen long years of intense research . . . thirteen long years of trial and error . . . Bog had thrown wires, gears and other mechanical debris into the growning ashtray. Not once in all that time had he thought to empty it!

"*Ho-diddle-dee-dee . . . it's the scientific life for me!*", sang the triumphant professor. And he had cause to sing! Quagmire Bog had invented a cuckoo clock . . . a very unique cuckoo clock . . . a revolutionary cuckoo clock! A cuckoo clock with a little birdie that came out sideways . . . through a revolving door!

This amazing innovation had caused immediate concern in distant Switzerland! And well they might be disturbed! Their centuries-long reputation for fine time-piece making was at stake. They had but one recourse! They would send a special delegation of watch-makers to Professor Bog's mountain-top sanctum in Hoooken . . . with instructions to offer the inventor any price for the patent and working model of his sideways cuckoo. To finance this important transaction, the gallant little Swiss nation had locked their one and only navy!

And now Professor Bog was clearing his cluttered workbench in anticipation of the

delegation's arrival. What a mess! He picked up the metallic remains of his perpetual motion machine which he had forgotten to rewind long ago. He chucked it onto the pile on the ashtray.

Next, he came upon a Chinese puzzle of linked rings. Sadly he uttered, "The essence of that to be solved is the unsolved . . . and what could better understand the unsolved but that which is also unsolved!" He threw the puzzle on the heap of other unsolved objects!

The clean-up campaign continued. Bog came upon a miniature guillotine he'd once contrived for clipping his toe-nails. Made it more sporting! he recalled. He relegated it to the mound . . . and the ashtray shuddered!

Now the professor was denuding his bench furiously! A blood-caked styptic pencil, a tarnished trombone slide, a blueprint for digging a proposed canal which was to be named Pan-ama, a batch of radio-active pecan-studded chocolate bars, a fire-extinguisher full of flat beer, a cyclotron full of dirty shirts, and finally, an old battered alarm clock . . . *with a radiant dial . . .* caused the straining ashtray to rebel! A geiger counter on the bench clicked insistently. Bog paid no heed to its warnings. He simply scooped it up and hurled it to the very top of the pile.

Alpha, beta and gamma rays vaulted over the rim of the churning ashtray. All that junk had turned into an *atomic pile*! The radium-shielded clock had been the catalyst . . . and the *last straw*!

The geiger counter sizzled feverishly, then there was a violent reaction and a mushroom cloud rose and flashed brilliantly in the evening sky.

When the Swiss watch-makers' delegation arrived on the scene, the mountain-top laboratory was gone. So was the mountain.

A glittering brass ashtray rocked peacefully in the warm sun. The ashtray was empty!

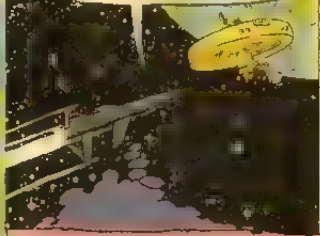
# HOMESICK!

HE COULD SEE THE SPACE-STATION NOW, FLOATING LIKE SOME GIGANTIC WEIRDLY SHAPED LIFE-RAFT UPON THE BLACK SEA OF SPACE. HE COULD SEE ITS LANDING RAMP AND ITS HATCHES AND THE LAUNCHING AREA WHERE, ONE YEAR BEFORE, HE... DAVID TODD... AND HIS BEST FR. END... LAWRENCE ARDSLEY... HAD TAKEN OFF FOR MAN'S FIRST TRIP TO MARS... AND A THOUSAND MILES BEYOND, HE COULD SEE THE GREEN SPHERE OF EARTH... HOME...

IT WON'T BE LONG NOW, LYNN, BABY! IT WON'T BELONG NOW! OH, HONEY, IF YOU ONLY KNEW HOW I'VE DREAMED OF THIS MOMENT!

YES, DAVID WAS COMING HOME... HOME TO LYNN ARDSLEY LARRY'S WIFE BUT LYNN WASN'T LARRY'S WIFE ANY LONGER LYNN WAS A WIDOW! LARRY HAD DIED...

HELLO, SPACE STATION! HELLO, SPACE STATION! THIS IS COLONEL TODD ON MARS SPACE-ROCKET NUMBER X-2! COME IN, SPACE STATION! COME IN...



DAVID FLIPPED ON THE RECEIVER AND WAITED FOR THE SPACE-STATION TO ANSWER. HE THOUGHT ABOUT LYNN... BEAUTIFUL, DESIRABLE LYNN. HE THOUGHT ABOUT THAT NIGHT THE NIGHT SHE AND DAVID HAD PLANNED LARRY'S MURDER!

IT WOULD BE SO EASY, BABY! LARRY WOULD NEVER GIVE YOU UP! BUT UP THERE... ON MARS... WELL, ANYTHING COULD HAPPEN.

OH, DAVID, I'M... I'M SCARED! WHAT IF HE SUSPECTS?



WILLIS W.

SUSPECTS THAT YOU AND I ARE IN LOVE? NOT A CHANCE! WE'VE BEEN TOO CAREFUL...

DAVID! CAN'T WE WAIT... UNTIL YOU BOTH GET BACK? PERHAPS IF I TOLD HIM I DIDN'T LOVE HIM ANY LONGER... IF I ASKED HIM FOR A DIVORCE.

HE WOULDN'T GIVE IT TO YOU, LYNN! YOU KNOW LARRY! HE'S TOO PROUD! NO! THIS IS THE ONLY WAY! MY ONE CHANCE...

WHAT WILL YOU TELL THEM? I MEAN, WHEN YOU GET BACK...

I'LL TELL THEM THAT LARRY CONTRACTED A DISEASE... AND DIED THERE... ON MARS!

THERE WILL BE OTHER SHIPS. DAVID! OTHERS AFTER YOURS! YOU'LL HAVE TO MAKE SURE THEY DON'T FIND HIS BODY.

DAVID REMEMBERED THOSE TRIPS... THOSE REGULAR TRIPS UP TO THE SPACE-STATION TO CHECK ON THE PROGRESS OF SPACE-ROCKET X-2'S CONSTRUCTION...

SHE'S ALMOST FINISHED, DAVE!

ANOTHER WEEK AND WE'LL BE ON OUR WAY, LARRY.

THE SPACE STATION HAD BEEN STARTED BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT BACK IN 1950. IT HAD BEEN COMPLETED IN 1972. IN 1986, SPACE-ROCKET X-4 HAD SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED A TRIP TO THE MOON AND BACK. NOW, S-RX-2 WAS NEARING COMPLETION. MAN'S FIRST ATTEMPT TO REACH MARS...

LARRY! DAVID! TOMORROW YOU LEAVE! IT WILL TAKE YOU APPROXIMATELY FIVE MONTHS TO GET THERE...

YOU WILL STAY IN CONSTANT TOUCH WITH US THROUGH MICRO-WAVE RADIO SIGNALS. YOU WILL REPORT EVERYTHING YOU FIND... EVERY DETAIL. IF MARS DOES HAVE A CIVILIZATION... AND IT PROVES HOSTILE... YOU WILL RETURN AT ONCE! MORE THAN LIKELY YOU WILL FIND NO SIGN OF LIFE ON MARS. EXPLORE! PHOTOGRAPH! NOTE ALL YOU SEE! GOOD LUCK!

THANK YOU, SIR!

AND THAT LAST NIGHT ON EARTH! DAVID REMEMBERED IT SO WELL! HE, AND LYNN, AND LARRY... TOGETHER... WISHING EACH OTHER HEALTH AND LUCK AND ALL GOOD THINGS... AND LARRY LAUGHING... NOT KNOWING THAT A WISH OF DEATH WAS IN DAVID'S AND LYNN'S HEARTS...

WELL! HERE'S TO YOU AND LYNN, LARRY! AND MANY MORE YEARS OF WEDDED BLISS!

TH-THANKS, DAVID!

HEY! WE'RE OUT OF ICE! I'LL BE RIGHT BACK!



... THOSE STOLEN MOMENTS TOGETHER. WHEN LARRY WAS OUT OF THE ROOM.

DARLING! DARLING!  
WHEN I GET BACK  
AND YOU'RE FREE

OH, HOLD  
ME, DAVID!  
HOLD ME...



...AND THAT MORNING AT THE ROCKET-PORT, WATCHING LARRY KISS LYNN GOODBYE, AND WAVING HIM FOR IT.

GOOD-BYE,  
MONEY!

GOOD-BYE  
LARRY!  
TAKE CARE.



... AND THEN THAT LAST SHUTTLE TRIP TO THE SPACE-STATION

YOU...YOU'VE GOT  
A WONDERFUL GAL  
THERE, LARRY!

DON'T I  
KNOW IT!



DAVID COULD SEE THE LAUNCHING SITE ON THE SPACE-STATION AS THOUGH IT WERE YESTERDAY. CRAWLING WITH BRASS CAME TO SEE THE MOMENTOUS EVENT

STAND BY FOR  
TAKE-OFF!  
COLONELS  
TODD AND  
ARDSLEY  
BOARD  
SHIP!

WELL(SO  
LONG,  
EVERYBODY!

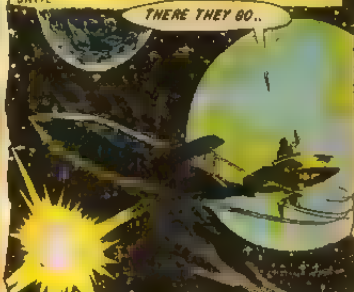
SEE  
YOU  
IN A  
YEAR!

GOOD  
LUCK,  
YOU  
TWO!



THE SECONDS TICKING OFF...THE INTERMINABLE TIME UNTIL

THERE THEY GO...



THOSE FIVE MONTHS ABOARD THE S-RX-2 WERE CLOUDED MEMORIES TO DAVID, NOW A MIST OF HATE, AND NERVOUS PLANNING, AND HUNGRY THOUGHTS OF LYNN BACK ON EARTH! AND THEN.

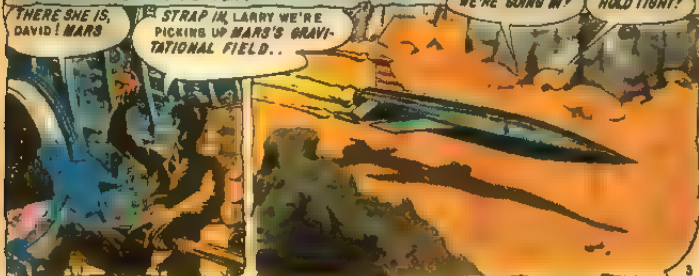
THERE SHE IS,  
DAVID! MARS

STRAP IN, LARRY WE'RE  
PICKING UP MARS'S GRAVI-  
TATIONAL FIELD...

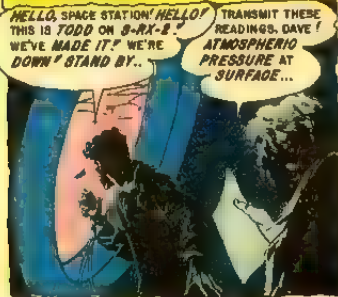
THE BLINDING PRESSURE OF LETTING DOWN...THE BLASTING OF THE ROCKET ENGINES AND THE SHUDDERING OF THE SHIP...

WE'RE GOING IN!

HOLD TIGHT!



AND THEN THE SILENCE. THE SILENCE OF MARS...  
ALL AROUND THEM...



HELLO, SPACE STATION! HELLO!  
THIS IS TODD ON 8-RX-2.  
WE'VE MADE IT! WE'RE  
DOWN! STAND BY...

TRANSMIT THESE  
READINGS, DAVE!  
ATMOSPHERIC  
PRESSURE AT  
SURFACE...

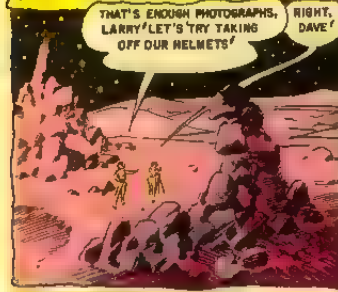
A HUNDRED OBSERVATIONS... A THOUSAND DESCRIPTIONS  
HOURS OF TRANSMITTING SCIENTIFIC DATA... AND THEN...



AND NOW, WE'RE GOING TO LEAVE  
THE SHIP! ARDSLEY AND I HAVE  
OUR SPACE-SUITS ON EVEN  
THOUGH THE ATMOSPHERE  
APPEARS ABLE TO SUSTAIN  
US!

TELL 'EM WE'LL  
TRY TAKING 'EM  
OFF AFTER A  
WHILE, DAVE!

... THEN STEPPING OUT ONTO THE BARREN RED WASTE-  
LAND OF THE RED PLANET ...



THAT'S ENOUGH PHOTOGRAPHS, RIGHT, DAVE!  
LARRY! LET'S TRY TAKING  
OFF OUR HELMETS!

AND THAT MOMENT... THAT LONG AWAITED MOMENT  
ARRIVED! DAVE SLIPPED HIS GUN FROM ITS HOLSTER...



IT'S OKAY, DAVE! LIKE BEING  
ON A MOUNTAIN-TOP... ON  
EARTH! IT'S... WHAT...  
WHAT'S THE  
GUN FOR?

FOR YOU, LARRY! I'M  
GOING TO KILL YOU...

DAVID REMEMBERED HOW LARRY'S  
AMAZED EXPRESSION FROZE AS HE  
FINGERED THE TRIGGER...



HOW THE SHOT SHATTERED THE  
THICK RED SILENCE, AND LARRY  
PITCHING FORWARD.

... THEN, STANDING OVER HIM AS  
THE REPORT ECHOED BACK AND  
FORTH FROM ANGRY DUNE TO  
ANGRY DUNE ...



SHE'S MINE, NOW, LARRY!  
LYNN'S MINE...

DAVID REMEMBERED HOW HE BURIED  
LARRY IN AN UNMARKED GRAVE



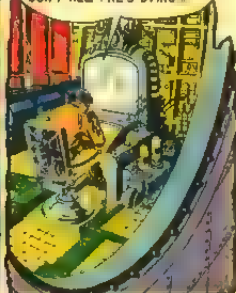
THEN REPORTED

THIS IS TODD, ON S-RX-2! WE'VE  
JUST COME BACK INSIDE!  
ARDSLEY DOESN'T FEEL WELL!  
WE TOOK OFF OUR  
SPACE-HELMETS!



DAY AFTER DAY

HE'S GETTING WORSE! THE  
DRUGS IN THE MED KIT  
DON'T HELP! HE'S DYING...

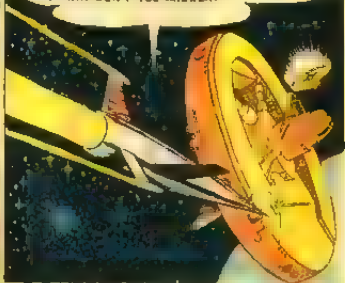


...UNTIL

COLONEL ARDSLEY IS DEAD! HIS LAST  
REQUEST WAS THAT I JETTISON HIS BODY  
INTO SPACE ON MY WAY BACK! I PROMISED!  
I'M COMING HOME .. NOW!



HELLO...SPACE STATION! HELLO SPACE STATION!  
THIS IS COLONEL TODD ON MARS SPACE-ROCKET  
X-2! WHY DON'T YOU ANSWER?



DAVID'S RECEIVER REMAINED SILENT! THE SPACE-  
STATION LOOMING LARGER AND LARGER NOW, DID NOT  
RESPOND.

STAND BY...? I'M COMING IN!



THE LAST OF THE S-RX-2'S FUEL WAS USED UP IN  
SLOWING THE SHIP! IT DRIFTED TOWARD THE LAND-  
ING RAMP, SUCKED IN BY THE HUGE TRACTION MAG-  
NETS...

GET THAT SHUTTLE TO EARTH  
READY BOYS! I'VE GOT A DATE..

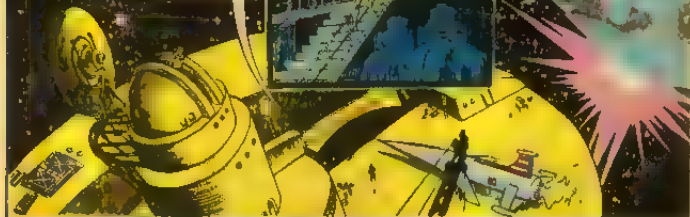


A DEADLY SILENCE HUNG OVER THE SPACE-STATION AS DAVID EMERGED FROM THE S-RX-2! THE STATION WAS DESERTED

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE! WHERE IS EVERYBODY! THERE'S NO SHUTTLE ROCKET HERE!

DAVID DARTED DOWN A HATCH INTO THE SPACE STATION'S QUARTERS

HEY! YOU KNEW I WAS COMING BACK! WHERE ARE YOU ALL? WHAT'S THE MATTER?



A LOUDSPEAKER BEHIND DAVID CRACKLED ON! A VOICE EXPLODED FROM BEHIND ITS GRILLED FACE.

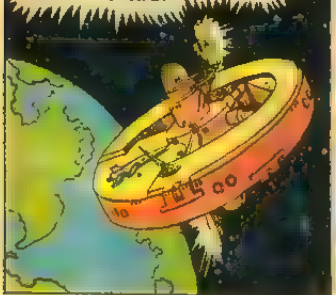
COLONEL TODD! THIS IS GENERAL MINORLY, MEDICAL CORPS...ON EARTH! IT'S MY DUTY TO INFORM YOU THAT...



SINCE COLONEL LAWRENCE ARDSLEY CONTRACTED AND DIED OF AN UNKNOWN DISEASE WHICH DID NOT RESPOND TO ANY KNOWN EARTH DRUGS WHILE ON MARS... AND THAT SINCE YOU ALSO WERE OBVIOUSLY EXPOSED TO THAT DISEASE AND MIGHT AT THIS TIME BE A CARRIER OF IT.

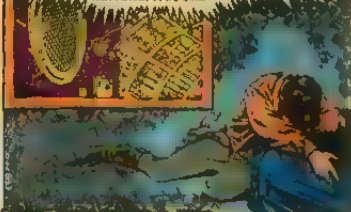


... THAT FOR THE SAFETY OF THE TWO AND ONE HALF BILLION PEOPLES OF EARTH, YOU ARE HEREBY QUARANTINED ON THAT SPACE STATION... FOR LIFE!



GENERAL MINORLY'S VOICE SOFTENED...

I'M SORRY, DAVE! GENUINELY SORRY! IT'S GOING TO BE TOUGH, I KNOW! BUT IT'S THE LIVES OF EVERYONE HERE AGAINST YOURS! YOU'LL FIND RATIONS... BOOKS



BUT DAVID TODD DID NOT HEAR GENERAL MINORLY'S SOOTHING VOICE! DAVID TODD WAS CRYING...

THE END

# JUDGMENT DAY!

THE MAN ROARED DOWN FROM THE NIGHT SKY HE'D COME FROM THE INFINITE VOID OF SPACE ACROSS THE ENDLESS COSMIC VACUUM HE'D COME FROM THE PLANET EARTH. HE'D COME IN A SHIP OF GLEAMING ALLOYS... BELCHING BLUE FLAMES AND YELLOW CLOUDS OF ATOMIC DUST AND HE'D COME ALONE. HE STEPPED TO THE PORT AMID THE GEEHS OF THE ROBOT POPULATION.

WELCOME! WELCOME, EARTHMAN, TO CYBRINIA... TO THE PLANET OF MECHANICAL LIFE!



Joe Orlando

THE MAN STEPPED FROM HIS GLEAMING SHIP. HE STEPPED INTO THE ARTIFICIAL SUNLIGHT THAT FLOODED THE LANDING SITE. HE EXTENDED HIS HAND.

I AM TARLTON... FROM 'WE ARE READY' WE 'EARTH COLONIZATION' HAVE LABORED LONG I AM HERE TO INSPECT. AND HARD TO PERFECT OUR SOCIETY. ARE READY WE HAVE EXPERIMENTED AND DISCOVERED, PLANNED AND BUILT... ASKED AND ANSWERED. WE ARE READY



TARLTON MOVED FORWARD THROUGH THE CROWD OF ORANGE ROBOTS THAT PRESSED AROUND HIM. HE STOPPED AND QUESTIONED ONE.

DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?

YOU ARE TARLTON... FROM EARTH? YOU ARE A REPRESENTATIVE OF OUR ORIGINAL GREATORS? IF YOU FIND THAT WE ARE READY, ALL OF THE WONDERS AND GREATNESS OF EARTH WILL BE OURS





TARLTON NODDED THE ARTIFICIAL  
SUNLIGHT DANCED ON HIS SPACE  
HELMET..

QUITE RIGHT THOUSANDS OF  
YEARS AGO, WE PLACED A **SMALL  
HANDFUL** OF YOU UPON THIS  
PLANET. THIS **SMALL HANDFUL**  
WAS GIVEN THE **KNOW-HOW** TO  
BUILD **MORE** OF YOU



WE LEFT YOU TO **YOURSELVES**  
WE HOPED THAT **IN TIME** YOU  
WOULD DEVELOP A SOCIETY  
WORTHY OF **INCLUSION** IN  
EARTH'S GREAT **SALADTIC  
REPUBLIC**. AT THAT TIME  
ALL OF OUR **SCIENTIFIC  
ADVANCES**, OUR **GLORY**,  
WOULD BECOME YOURS...



COME, TARLTON LET  
US SHOW YOU WHAT  
WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED!  
LET US SHOW YOU THAT  
WE ARE READY

LEAD  
THE WAY



THE SPACE-SUIT CLAD EARTH-MAN FOLLOWED THE  
ORANGE ROBOT PAST THE CROWD OF METAL ONLOOK-  
ERS TO A SLEEK-LOOKING LOW VEHICLE..

THIS IS KNOWN AS A MOBILE-CAR.  
IT WAS DEVELOPED QUITE SOME  
TIME AGO BY H-R-E-PHORD. IT  
OPERATES BY MEANS OF AN INTERNAL  
COMBUSTION ENGINE...

YES. GOOD!  
GOOD!  
**TWENTIETH  
CENTURY  
LEVEL..**



THE SPEEDY MOBILE-CAR SWEEP THE EARTHMAN  
THROUGH A SHINING CITY, ALONG STREETS JAMMED  
WITH CHEERING ORANGE ROBOTS..

THIS IS OUR CAPITOL  
CITY! THAT BUILDING  
THERE IS OUR **HOUSE  
OF DELEGATES...**  
**ELECTED BY  
THE POPULACE..**

HMM INTERESTING  
DEMOCRATIC RULE VERY  
GOOD. AND THAT  
BUILDING



THE EARTHMAN POINTED TO A LONG LOW  
STRUCTURE..

THAT BUILDING  
IS OUR **CONSTRUCTION LINE**  
AND **ASSEMBLY PLANT** WHERE  
OUR **POPULATION** IS MADE..

STOP HERE,  
I WOULD LIKE  
TO SEE IT..



THE MOBILE-CAR PULLED UP BEFORE THE PLANT, AND  
THE EARTH-MAN GOT OUT. HE FOLLOWED HIS ORANGE  
ROBOT-GUIDE INTO THE BUILDING

THIS IS THE **PARTS DEPARTMENT**  
WHERE OUR **UNITS** ARE  
**CONSTRUCTED..**

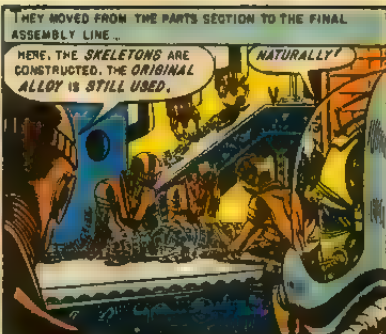
I SEE ONLY  
**ORANGE WORKERS!**  
WHAT ABOUT THE  
**BLUE ROBOTS..**





BARLTON'S GUIDE TURNED TO HIM SHAKING HIS HEAD...

OH WE WE MAKE ONLY ORANGE. I SEE. ROBOTS WERE THE BLUE ROBOTS. SHALL WELL... I'LL TAKE YOU TO THEIR PLANT LATER... ON..



THEY MOVED FROM THE PARTS SECTION TO THE FINAL ASSEMBLY LINE...

HERE, THE SKELETONS ARE CONSTRUCTED. THE ORIGINAL ALLOY IS STILL USED.

NATURALLY!



THEY MOVED ALONG THE ASSEMBLY LINE...

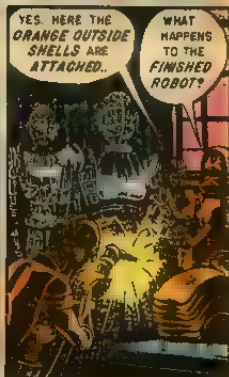
HERE, THE INTERNAL UNITS... MOTORS, MAGNETS, RELAYS, POWER SUPPLIES, AND SO FORTH, ARE INSTALLED.

NO IMPROVEMENTS ON THE ORIGINAL DESIGN, I SEE...



NO! WE DARED NOT ATTEMPT IT. THESE MODELS WILL BE EXACTLY LIKE THE ORIGINALS.

AND THIS IS THE SHEATHING STAGE...



YES. HERE THE ORANGE OUTSIDE SHELLS ARE ATTACHED...

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE FINISHED ROBOT?



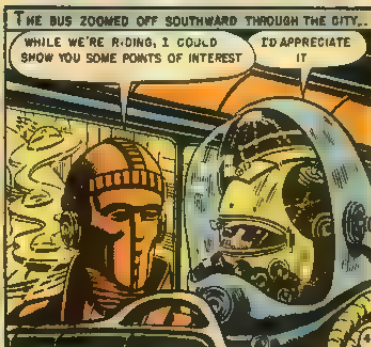
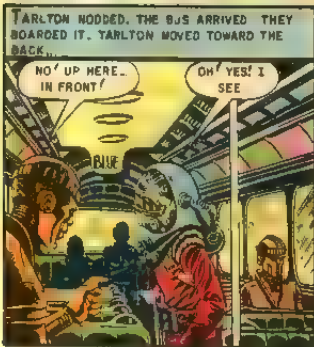
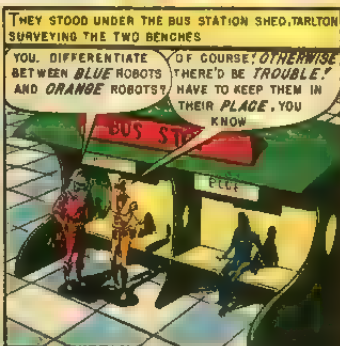
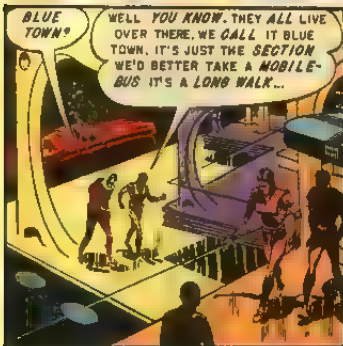
HE IS TESTED, THEN PLACED IN THE 'EDUCATOR', WHERE HIS MECHANICAL BRAIN IS CHARGED WITH ALL KNOWLEDGE AVAILABLE TO OUR SOCIETY...

AND THEN...



HE BECOMES A MEMBER OF THAT SOCIETY. FIRST, HE MUST WORK ON THE ASSEMBLY LINE FOR A SHORT PERIOD

GOOD. RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD PROPAGATION. GOOD.



THEY SPED PAST A LARGE IMPOSING STRUCTURE OUTSIDE A LINE OF ORANGE ROBOTS WAITED PATIENTLY...

A RECHARGING STATION! THERE OUR POWER UNITS ARE SUPPLIED WITH ENERGY WHEN THEY NEED IT...

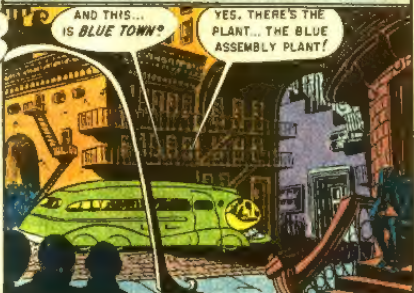
SIMILAR TO A RESTAURANT FOR HUMANS, I SEE...



SOON THE MOBILE-BUS ENTERED A SEEDY SECTION OF THE CITY. THE BUILDINGS NO LONGER SHINED. THE STREETS WERE CROWDED WITH BLUE ROBOTS...

AND THIS... IS BLUE TOWN?

YES, THERE'S THE PLANT... THE BLUE ASSEMBLY PLANT!



TARLTON AND HIS ROBOT GUIDE ALIT FROM THE MOBILE-BUS AND IT SPED OFF...

YOU'D BETTER GO ON IN ALONE, TARLTON, I'LL WAIT OUT HERE!

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN THE BLUE PLANT?



THE GUIDE SHOOK HIS HEAD...

NO! I HARDLY EVER EVEN COME TO BLUE TOWN.

COME IN WITH ME. I WANT YOU TO. IT MIGHT PROVE INTERESTING.



TARLTON MOVED INTO THE BUILDING, HIS ORANGE GUIDE FOLLOWING SHYLY. A BLUE ROBOT CAME TO MEET HIM...

ALLOW ME TO APOLOGIZE FOR THE APPEARANCE OF UNDER-SHLY. A BLUE ROBOT CAME TO MEET HIM... FUNDS ARE LIMITED.



THE BLUE ROBOT GUIDED TARLTON INTO THE PARTS DEPARTMENT...

THIS IS WHERE OUR UNITS ARE CONSTRUCTED.

NOTICE, MY FRIEND, THEY USE THE SAME ALLOY IN THEIR PARTS AS YOU DO.

I... I SEE...



...THEN ON TO THE ASSEMBLY LINE...

NOTICE THE INTERNAL UNITS, MY FRIEND. THE SAME DESIGNS, THE ORIGINAL DESIGNS. NO IMPROVEMENT! NO DIFFERENCE! EXACTLY LIKE YOURS!

WE... WE KNOW THAT TARLTON...





AND FINALLY TO THE SHEATHING STAGE...

IT IS ONLY *HERE*, MY FRIEND, WITH THE *BLUE* SHEATHINGS, THAT A DIFFERENCE CAN BE DETECTED. BUT THE *SHEATHINGS* ARE ONLY *OUTSIDE COVERINGS*. THE *INSIDE STRUCTURES* ARE NO DIFFERENT THAN YOURS...

THE *SHEATHINGS* MAKE THAT DIFFERENCE TO THE *ORANGE* ROBOTS, TARLTON!



IT LIMITS US TO *MENTAL JOBS*... SENDS US TO THE *REAR* OF *MOBILE-BUSES*... PLACES US IN *DIFFERENT RECHARGING STATIONS*... FORCES US TO LIVE IN A *SPECIAL SECTION* OF THE CITY...

AND WHEN A *BLUE ROBOT* IS *COMPLETED*. THEN WHAT...?



HE IS *TESTED*, THEN PLACED IN THE '*EDUCATOR*', TARLTON. ME, ONLY THIS *EDUCATOR* IS A MY '*BLUE*' *EDUCATOR*! IT HASN'T THE *ADVANTAGES* OF THE '*ORANGE*' *EDUCATOR*...

TELL ME, MY FRIEND...

...WOULD YOU DENY THAT THE *DIFFERENCES* BETWEEN YOU AND THE *BLUE* ROBOTS ARE *TAUGHT*... IN YOUR '*EDUCATOR*'?

I...I COULDN'T DENY THAT, TARLTON.

THE '*EDUCATOR*' IS THE PARENTS AND THE RELATIVES AND THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE SCHOOL ALL ROLLED INTO ONE, EH?

I...I DON'T UNDERSTAND THOSE WORDS, TARLTON.



NO! I GUESS YOU WOULDN'T! YOU SAID BEFORE THAT THIS WAS A *FREE ENTERPRISE SOCIETY*. THAT AFTER AN ORANGE ROBOT SERVES ITS TIME ON THE ASSEMBLY LINE, THAT IT IS *FREE TO FOLLOW ITS OWN CHOICE OF ENDEAVOR*...

I...I SAID THAT, YES.

THAT OF COURSE, DOES NOT INCLUDE THE *BLUE* ROBOTS, EH? *THEIR CHOICES OF ENDEAVOR ARE LIMITED*...

YOU ARE *LECTURING ME* AS THOUGH ALL THIS WERE MY FAULT, TARLTON! THIS *EXISTED* LONG BEFORE I WAS *MADE*! WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT? I'M ONLY *ONE ROBOT*!





I AM SORRY MY FRIEND! YES, I KNOW YOU ARE ONLY ONE ROBOT. THAT IS WHY I AM AFRAID THAT CYBRINIA IS NOT YET READY TO JOIN THE GREAT GALACTIC REPUBLIC.

NO, WAIT, TARLTON.

TARLTON MOVED OUT OF THE BLUE ASSEMBLY PLANT THROUGH BLUE TOWN. THE ORANGE ROBOT HURRIED AFTER HIM...

WHY, TARLTON? WHY AREN'T WE READY?

ASK YOURSELF THAT, MY FRIEND! TELL YOUR FELLOW ROBOTS TO ASK THEMSELVES THAT QUESTION!

TARLTON MOVED FAST. THE ROBOT CLANKED AFTER HIM...

IS...IS THERE ANY HOPE, TARLTON? FOR US?

OF COURSE THERE IS!

TARLTON STOPPED BELOW HIS GLEAMING ROCKET...

OF COURSE THERE'S HOPE FOR YOU, MY FRIEND. FOR A WHILE, ON EARTH, IT LOOKED LIKE THERE WAS NO HOPE! BUT WHEN MANKIND ON EARTH LEARNED TO LIVE TOGETHER, REAL PROGRESS FIRST BEGAN. THE UNIVERSE WAS SUDDENLY OURS.

...AND WHEN WE LEARN TO LIVE TOGETHER...

THE UNIVERSE WILL BE YOURS TOO. GOOD-BYE, MY FRIEND!

GOOD-BYE, TARLTON.

THE SHIP ROARED UP INTO THE NIGHT SKY. IT ROARED INTO THE INFINITE VOID OF SPACE... INTO THE ENDLESS COSMIC VACUUM! IT ROARED TOWARD GLORIOUS EARTH...

AND INSIDE THE SHIP, THE MAN REMOVED HIS SPACE HELMET AND SHOOK HIS HEAD, AND THE INSTRUMENT LIGHTS MADE THE BEADS OF PERSPIRATION ON HIS DARK SKIN TWINKLE LIKE DISTANT STARS...



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